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## TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS.

By THOMAS HUGHES.



You see nothing but a struggling mass of boys and a leather ball, which seems to excite them all to great fury,  
as a red rag does a bull.



## CHAPTER I.

## THE BROWN FAMILY.

THE present writer having been for many years a devout Brown worshiper, will tell you what sort of folk the Browns are, and if you don't like them let you and I cry quits before either of us can grumble at the other.

In the first place, the Browns are a fighting family. One may question their wisdom, or wit, or beauty, but about their fight there can be no question. Wherever hard knocks of any kind, visible or invisible, are going, there the Brown who is nearest must shove in his carcass. And these carcasses for the most part answer very well to the characteristic propensity; they are a square-headed and snake-necked generation, broad in the shoulder, deep in the chest, and thin in the flank, carrying no lumber. Then for clanship, they are as bad as Highlanders; it is amazing the belief they have in one another. With them there is nothing like the Browns, to the third and fourth generation. "Blood is thicker than water," is one of their pet sayings. They can't be happy unless they are always meeting one another. Never were such people for family gatherings, which, were you a stranger, or sensitive, you might think had better not have been gathered together. For during the whole time of their being together they luxuriate in telling one another their minds on whatever subject turns up; and their minds are wonderfully antagonistic, and all their opinions are downright beliefs. Till you've been among them some time and understand them, you can't think but that they are quarrelling. Not a bit of it; they love and respect one another ten times the more after a good set family arguing bout, and go back, one to his curacy, another to his chambers, and another to his regiment, freshened for work, and more than ever convinced that the Browns are the height of company.

This family training, too, combined with their turn for combativeness, makes them eminently quixotic. They can't let anything alone which they think going wrong. They must speak their mind about it, annoying all easy-going folk; and spend their time and money in having a tinker at it, however hopeless the job. It is an impossibility to a Brown to leave the most disreputable lame dog on the other side of a stile. Most other folk get tired of such work. The old Browns, with red faces, white whiskers, and bald heads, go on believing and fighting to a green old age. They have always a crotchet going, till the old man with the scythe reaps and garners them away for troublesome old boys as they are.

And the most provoking thing is, that no failures knock them up, or make them hold their hands, or think you or me, or other sane people in the right. Failures slide off them like July rain off a duck's back-feathers. Jem and his whole family turn out bad, and cheat them one week, and the next they are doing the same thing for Jack; and when he goes to the treadmill, and his wife and children to the workhouse, they will be on the look-out for Bill to take his place.

However, it is time for us to get from the general to the particular; so, leaving the great army of Browns, who are scattered over the whole empire on which the sun never sets, and whose general diffusion I take to be the chief cause of that empire's stability, let us at once fix our attention upon the small nest of Browns in which our hero was hatched, and which dwelt in that portion of the Royal county of Berks which is called the Vale of White Horse.

Most of you have probably travelled down the Great Western Railway as far as Swindon. Those of you who did so with their eyes open have been aware, soon after leaving the Didcot station, of a fine range of chalk hills running parallel with the railway on the left-hand side as you go down, and distant some two or three miles, more or less, from the line. The highest point in the range is the White Horse Hill, which you come in front of just before you stop at the Shrivenham Station. If you love English scenery and have a few hours to spare, you can't do better, the next time you pass, than stop at the Farringdon-road, or Shrivenham station, and make your way to that highest point. And those who care for the vague old stories that haunt country sides all about England, will not, if they are wise, be content with only a few hours' stay; for, glorious as the view is, the neighborhood is yet more interesting for its relics of by-gone times. I only know two English neighborhoods thoroughly, and in each, within a circle of five miles, there is enough of interest and beauty to last any reasonable man his life. I believe this to be the case almost throughout the country, but each has a special attraction, and none can be richer than the one I am speaking of and going to introduce you to very particularly; for on this subject I must be prosy; so those that don't care for England in detail may skip the chapter.

O young England! young England! You who are born into these racing railroad times, when there's a Great Exhibition, or some monster sight, every year, and you can get over a couple of thousand miles of ground for three pound ten, in a five weeks' holiday, why don't you know more of your own birth-places! You're all in the ends of the earth, it seems to me, as soon as you get your necks out of the educational collar for midsummer holidays, long vacations, or what not. Going round Ireland, with a return-ticket, in a fortnight; dropping your copies of *Tennyson* on the tops of

Swiss mountains; or pulling down the Danube in Oxford racing-boats. And when you get home for a quiet fortnight, you turn the steam off, and lie on your backs in the paternal garden, surrounded by the last batch of books from Mudie's library, and half bored to death. Well, well! I know it has its good side. You all patter French more or less, and perhaps German; you have seen men and cities, no doubt, and have your opinions, such as they are, about schools of painting, high art, and all that; have seen the pictures at Dresden and the Louvre, and know the taste of sour-kraut. All I say is, you don't know your own lanes and woods and fields. Though you may be chock-full of science, not one in twenty of you knows where to find the wood-sorrel, or bee-orchis, which grow in the next wood, or on the down three miles off, or what the bog-bean and wood-sage are good for. And as for the country legends, the stories of the old gable-ended farm-houses, the place where the last skirmish was fought in the civil wars, where the parish butts stood, where the last highwayman turned to bay; where the last ghost was laid by the parson, they're gone out of date altogether.

Now, in my time, when we got home by the old coach, which put us down at the cross-roads with our boxes, the first day of the holidays, and had been driven off by the family coachman, singing "Dulce Domum" at the top of our voices, there we were, fixtures, till black Monday came round. We had to cut out our own amusements within a walk or a ride of home. And so we got to know all the country folk, and their ways and songs and stories, by heart; and went over the fields and woods and hills again and again, till we made friends of them all. We were Berkshire, or Gloucestershire, or Yorkshire boys; and you're young cosmopolites, belonging to all counties and no countries. No doubt it's all right; I dare say it is. This is the day of large views and glorious humanity, and all that; but I wish backward play hadn't gone out in the Vale of White Horse, and that that confounded Great Western hadn't carried away Alfred's Hill to make an embankment.

But to return to the said Vale of White Horse, the country in which the first scenes of this true and interesting story are laid. As I said, the Great Western now runs right through it, and it is a land of large rich pastures, bounded by ox-fences, and covered with fine hedgerow timber, with here and there a nice little gorse or spinney, where abideth poor Charley, having no other cover to which to betake himself for miles and miles, when pushed out some fine November morning by the Old Berkshire. Those who have been there, and well mounted, only know how he and the stanch little pack who dash after him—heads high and sterno low, with a breast-high scent—can consume the ground at such times. There being little plough-land, and few woods, the Vale is only an average sporting country, except for hunting. The villages are straggling, queer, old-fashioned places, the houses being dropped down without the least regularity, in nooks and out-of-the-way corners, by the sides of shadowy lanes and foot-paths, each with its patch of garden. They are built chiefly of good gray-stone and thatched; though I see that within the last year or two the red brick cottages are multiplying, for the Vale is beginning to manufacture largely both bricks and tiles. There are lots of waste ground by the side of the roads in every village, amounting often to village greens, where feed the pigs and ganders of the people; and these roads are old-fashioned, homely roads, very dirty and badly made, and hardly endurable in winter, but still pleasant jog-trot roads, running through the great pasture-lands, dotted here and there with little clumps of thorns, where the sleek kine are feeding, with no fence on either side of them, and a gate at the end of each field, which makes you get out of your gig (if you keep one), and gives you a chance of looking about you every quarter of a mile.

One of the moralists whom we sat under in our youth—was it the great Richard Swiveller, or Mr. Stiggins?—says, "We are born in a vale, and must take the consequences of being found in such a situation." These consequences, I for one am ready to encounter. I pity people who weren't born in a vale. I don't mean a flat country, but a vale; that is, a flat country bounded by hills. The having your hill *always* in view if you choose to turn towards him, that's the essence of a vale. There he is forever in the distance, your friend and companion; you never lose him as you do in hilly districts.

And then what a hill is the White Horse Hill! There it stands right up above all the rest, nine hundred feet above the sea, and the boldest, bravest shape for a chalk hill you ever saw. Let us go up to the top of him, and see what is to be found there. Ay, you may well wonder, and think it odd you never heard of this before; but, wonder or not, as you please, there are hundreds of such things lying about England, which wiser folk than you know nothing of, and care nothing for. Yes, it's a magnificent Roman camp, and no mistake, with gates, and ditches, and mounds, all as complete as it was twenty years after the strong old rogues left it. Here, right up on the highest point, from which they say you can see eleven counties, they trenched round all the table-land, some twelve or fourteen acres, as was their custom, for they could not bear anybody to overlook them, and made their eyrie. The ground falls away rapidly on all sides. Was there ever such turf in the whole world! You sink up to your

ankles at every step, and yet the spring of it is delicious. There is always a breeze in the "camp," as it is called, and here it lies, just as the Romans left it, except that cairn on the east side, left by Her Majesty's corps of Sappers and Miners the other day, when they and the Engineer officer had finished their sojourn there, and their surveys for the Ordnance Map of Berkshire. It is altogether a place that you won't forget—a place to open a man's soul and make him prophesy, as he looks down on that great Vale spread out as the garden of the Lord before him, and wave on wave of the mysterious downs behind; and to the right and left the chalk hills running away into the distance, along which he can trace for miles the old Roman road, "the Ridgeway" ("the Rudge," as the country folk call it), keeping straight along the highest back of the hills; such a place as Balak brought Balaam to, and told him to prophesy against the people in the valley beneath. And he could not, neither shall you, for they are a people of the Lord who abide there.

And now we leave the camp, and descend towards the west, and are on the Ash-down. We are treading on heroes. It is sacred ground for Englishmen, more sacred than all but one or two fields where their bones lie whitening. For this is the actual place where our Alfred won his great battle, the battle of Ashdown ("Æscendum" in the chronicles), which broke the Danish power, and made England a Christian land. The Danes held the camp and the slope where we are standing—the whole crown of the hill, in fact. "The heathen had beforehand seized the higher ground," as old Asser says, having wasted everything behind them from London, and being just ready to burst down on the fair vale, Alfred's own birth-place and heritage. And up the heights came the Saxons, as they did at the Alma. "The Christians led up their line from the lower ground. There stood also on that spot a single thorn-tree, marvellous stumpy (which we ourselves with our very own eyes have seen)." Bless the old chronicler! does he think nobody ever saw the single "thorn-tree" but himself! Why, there it stands to this very day, just on the edge of the slope, and I saw it not three weeks since; an old single thorn-tree, "marvellous stumpy." At least, if it isn't the same tree, it ought to have been, for it's just in the same place where the battle must have been won or lost—"around which, as I was saying, the two lines of foemen came together in battle with a huge shout. And in this place one of the two Kings of the heathen and five of his earls fell down and died, and many thousands of the heathen side in the same place." After which crowning mercy, the pious King, that there might never be wanting a sign and a memorial to the country-side, carved out on the northern side of the chalk hill, under the camp, where it is almost precipitous, the great Saxon white horse, which he who will may see from the railway, and which gives its name to the vale, over which it has looked these thousand years and more.

Right down below the White Horse is a curious deep and broad gully called "the Manger," into one side of which the hills fall with a series of the most lovely sweeping curves, known as the "Giant's Stairs;" they are not a bit like stairs, but I never saw any thing like them anywhere else, with their short green turf, and tender blue-bells, and gossamer and thistle-down gleaming in the sun, and the sheep-paths running along their sides like ruled lines.

The other side of the Manger is formed by the Dragon's Hill, a curious little round self-confident fellow, thrown forward from the range, and utterly unlike those round him. On this hill some deliverer of mankind—St. George, the country folk used to tell me—killed a dragon. Whether it were St. George, I can not say; but surely a dragon was killed there, for you may see the marks yet where his blood ran down, and mere by token the place where it ran down is the easiest way up the hill-side.

Passing along the Ridgeway to the west for about a mile, we come to a little clump of young beech and fir, with a growth of thorn and privet underwood. Here you may find nests of the strong down partridge and peewit, but take care that the keeper isn't down upon you; and in the middle of it is an old cromlech, a huge flat stone raised on seven or eight others, and led up to by a path, with large single stones set up on each side. This is Wayland Smith's cave, a place of classic fame now; but as Sir Walter has touched it, I may as well let it alone, and refer you to Kenilworth for the legend.

The thick deep wood which you see in the hollow, about a mile off, surrounds Ashdown Park, built by Inigo Jones. Four broad alleys are cut through the wood, from circumference to centre, and each leads to one face of the house. The mystery of the downs hangs about house and wood, as they stand there alone, so unlike all around, with the green slopes, studded with great stones just about this part, stretching away on all sides. It was a wise Lord Craven, I think, who pitched his tent there.

Passing along the Ridgeway to the east, we soon come to cultivated land. The downs, strictly so called, are no more; Lincolnshire farmers have been imported, and the long fresh slopes are sheep-walks no more, but grow famous turnips and barley. One of these improvers lives over there, at the "Seven Barrows" farm, another mystery of the great downs. There are the barrows still, solemn and silent, like ships in the calm sea, the



sepulchres of some sons of men. But of whom? It is three miles from the White Horse, too far for the slain of Ashdown to be buried there—who shall say what heroes are waiting there? But we must get down into the Vale again, and so away by the Great Western Railway to town, for time and the printer's devil press, and it is a terrible long and slippery descent, and a shocking bad road. At the bottom, however, there is a pleasant public, whereat we must really take a modest quencher, for the down air is provocative of thirst. So we pull up under an old oak which stands before the door.

"What is the name of your hill, landlord?"

"Blawing Stwun Hill, sir, to be sure."

[READER. "Sturm?"]

AUTHOR. "Stone, stupid: the Blowing Stone."

"And of your house? I can't make out the sign."

"Blawing Stwun, sir," says the landlord, pouring out his old ale from a Toby Philpot jug, with a melodious crash, into the long-necked glass.

"What queer names!" say we, sighing at the end of our draught, and holding out the glass to be replenished.

"Bean't queer at all, as I can see, sir," says mine host, handing back our glass, "seeing as this here is the Blawing Stwun his self;" putting his hand on a square lump of stone, some three feet and a half high, perforated with two or three queer holes, like petrified antediluvian rat-holes, which lies there close under the oak, under our very nose. We are more than ever puzzled, and drink our second glass of ale, wondering what will come next. "Like to hear un, sir?" says mine host, setting down Toby Philpot on the tray, and resting both hands on the "Stwun."

We are ready for anything; and he, without waiting for a reply, applies his mouth to one of the rat holes. Something must come of it, if he doesn't burst. Good heavens! I hope he has no apoplectic tendencies. Yes, here it comes, sure enough, a grewsome sound between a moan and a roar, and spreads itself away over the valley, and up the hill-side, and into the woods at the back of the house, a ghost-like awful voice. "Um, do say, sir," says mine host, rising purple-faced while the moan is still coming out of the Stwun, "as they used in old times to warn the country-side, by blawing the Stwun when the enemy was a comin'—and as how folks could make un heard then for seven mile round; leastways, so I've heard lawyer Smith say, and he knows a smart eight about them old times." We can hardly

awallow lawyer Smith's seven miles, but could the blowing of the stone have been a summons, a sort of sending the fiery cross round the neighborhood in the old times? What old times? Who knows? We pay for our beer, and are thankful.

"And what's the name of the village just below, landlord?"

"Kingstone Lisle, sir."

"Fine plantations you've got here."

"Yes, sir, the Squire's mazin fond of trees and such like."

"No wonder. He's got some real beauties to be fond of. Good-day, landlord."

"Good-day, sir, and a pleasant ride to 'e."

And now, my boys, you whom I want to get for readers, have you had enough? Will you give in at once, and say you're convinced, and let me begin my story, or will you have more of it? Remember, I've only been over a little bit of the hillside yet, what you could ride round easily on your ponies in an hour. I'm only just come down into the vale, by Blowing Stone Hill; and if I once begin about the vale, what's to stop me?

You'll have to hear all about Wantage, the birthplace of Alfred and Farringdon, which held out so long for Charles the First (the vale was near Oxford and dreadfully malignant; full of Throgmortons, Puseys, and Pyes, and such like, and their brawny retainers). Did you ever read Thomas Ingoldsby's "Legend of Hamilton Tighe"? If you haven't, you ought to have. Well, Farringdon is where he lived before he went to sea; his real name was Hamden Pye, and the Pyes were the great folk at Farringdon. Then there's Pusey. You've heard of the Pusey horn which King Canute gave to the Puseys of that day, and which the gallant old squire, lately gone to his rest (whom Berkshire freeholders turned out of last Parliament, to their eternal disgrace, for voting according to his conscience), used to brag out on high days, holidays and bonfire nights. And the splendid old Cross church at Uffington, the Uffingas town; how the whole country-side teems with Saxon names and memories! And the old moated grange at Compton, nestled close under the hillside, where twenty Marianas may have lived, with its bright water-lilies in the moat, and its yew walk, "the cloister walk," and its peerless terraced gardens. There they all are, and twenty things besides, for those who care about them and have eyes. And these are the sort of things you may find, I believe, every one of you, in any common English country neighborhood.

Will you look for them under your own noses, or will you not? Well, well, I've done what I can to make you, and if you will go gadding over half Europe now every holidays, I can't help it. I was born and bred a west-countryman, thank God! a Wessex man, a citizen of the noblest Saxon kingdom of Wessex, a regular "Angliar Saxon," the very soul of me "adscriptus glebe." There's nothing like the old country-side for me,

and no music like the twang of the real old Saxon tongue, as one gets it fresh from the veritable chaw in the White Horse Vale.

Here at any rate lived and stopped at home Squire Brown, J. P. for the county of Berks, in a village near the foot of White Horse range. And here he dealt out justice and mercy in a rough way, and begat sons and daughters, and hunted the fox, and grumbled at the badness of the roads and the times. And his wife dealt out stockings, and calico shirts, and smock frocks, and comforting drinks to the old folk with the "rheumatiz," and good counsel to all; and kept the coal and clothes-clubs going, for Yule-tide, when the bands of mummers came round dressed out in ribbons and colored paper caps, and stamped round the Squire's kitchen, repeating in true sing-song vernacular, the legend of St. George and his fight, and the ten-pound Doctor who plays his part at healing the Saint—a relic, I believe, of the old middle-age mysteries. It was the first dramatic representation which greeted the eyes of little Tom, who was brought down into the kitchen by his nurse to witness it, at the mature age of three years. Tom was the eldest child of his parents, and from his earliest babyhood exhibited the family characteristics in great strength. He was a hearty strong boy from the first, given to fighting with and escaping from his nurse, and fraternizing with all the village boys, with whom he made expeditions all round the neighborhood. And here in the quiet, old-fashioned country village, under the shadow of the everlasting hills, Tom Brown was reared, and never left it till he went first to school when nearly eight years of age, for in those days change of air twice a year was not thought absolutely necessary for the health of all her Majesty's lieges.

I have been credibly informed, and am inclined to believe, that the various Boards of Directors of Railway Companies, those gigantic jobbers and bribers, while quarreling about everything else, agreed together some ten years back to buy up the learned profession of medicine, body and soul. To this end they set apart several millions of money, which they continually distribute judiciously among the doctors, stipulating only this one thing, that they shall prescribe change of air to every patient who can pay, or borrow money to pay, a railway fare, and see their prescription carried out. If it be not for this, why is it that none of us can be well at home for a year together? It wasn't so twenty years ago—not a bit of it. The Browns didn't go out of the county once in five years. A visit to Reading or Abingdon twice a year, at Assizes or Quarter Sessions, which the Squire made on his horse, with a pair of saddle-bags containing his wardrobe—a stay of a day or two at some country neighbor's—or an expedition to a county ball or the yeomanry review—made up the sum of the Brown locomotion in most years. A stray Brown from some distant county dropped in every now and then; or from Oxford, on grave nag, an old don, contemporary of the Squire; and were looked upon by the Brown household and the villagers with the same sort of feeling with which we now regard a man who has crossed the Rocky Mountains or launched a boat on the great lake in Central Africa. The White Horse Vale, remember, was traversed by no great road; nothing but country parish roads and these very bad. Only one coach ran there, and this one only from Wantage to London, so that the western part of the vale was without regular means of moving on, and certainly didn't seem to want them. There was the canal, by the way, which supplied the country-side with coal, and up and down which continually went the long barges, with the big black men lounging by the side of the horses along the towing-path, and the women in bright colored handkerchiefs standing in the sterns, steering. Standing I say, but you could never see whether they were standing or sitting, all but their heads and shoulders being out of sight in the cosy little cabins which occupied some eight feet of the stern, and which Tom Brown pictured to himself as the most desirable of residences. His nurse told him that those good-natured-looking women were in the constant habit of enticing children into the barges and taking them up to London and selling them, which Tom wouldn't believe, and which made him resolve, as soon as possible, to accept the offered invitation of these sirens to "young Master," to come in and have a ride. But as yet the nurse was too much for Tom.

Yet why should I after all abuse the gadabout propensities of my countrymen? We are a vagabond nation now, that's certain, for better for worse. I am a vagabond; I have been away from home no less than five distinct times in the last year. The Queen sets us the example—we are moving on from top to bottom. Little dirty Jack who abides in Clement's Inn gateway, and blacks my boots for a penny, takes his month's hop-picking every year, as a matter of course. Why shouldn't he? I'm delighted at it. I love vagabonds, only I prefer poor to rich ones,—couriers and ladies' maids, imperials and travelling carriages, are an abomination unto me—I cannot away with them. But for dirty Jack and every good fellow who moves about with chattels and house on his back, why, good luck to them, and many a merry road side adventure, and steaming supper in the chimney corners of road-side inns, Swiss chalets, Hottentot kraals, or wherever else

they like to go. So having succeeded in contradicting myself in my first chapter (which gives me great hopes that you will all go on, and think me a good fellow, notwithstanding my crotchets), I shall here shut up for the present and consider my ways; having resolved to "sar" it out," as we say in the Vale, "holus bolus," just as it comes, and then you'll probably get the truth out of me.

## CHAPTER I.

### "THE VEAST."

—That venerable and learned poet (whose voluminous works we all think if the correct thing to admire and talk about, but don't read often) most truly says, "The child is father to the man;" a *fortiori*, therefore he must be father to the boy. So as we are going at any rate to see Tom Brown through his boyhood, supposing we never get any farther, which, if you show a proper sense of the value of this history, there is no knowing but what we may, let us have a look at the life and environments of the child, in the quiet country village to which we were introduced in the last chapter.

Tom, as has been already said, was a robust and combative urchin, and at the age of four began to struggle against the yoke and authority of his nurse. That functionary was a good-hearted, tearful, scatter-brained girl, lately taken by Tom's mother, Madam Brown, as she was called, from the village school to be trained as nursery-maid. Madam Brown was a rare trainer of servants, and spent herself freely in the profession; for profession it was, and gave her more trouble by half than many people take to earn a good income. Her servants were known and sought after for miles round. Almost all the girls who attained a certain place in the village school were taken by her, one or two at a time, as house-maids, laundry-maids, nursery-maids, or kitchen-maids, and, after a year or two's drilling, were started in life amongst the neighboring families, with good principles and wardrobes. One of the results of this system was the perpetual despair of Mrs. Brown's cook and own maid, who no sooner had a notable girl made to their hands, than Missus was sure to find a good place for her and send her off, taking in fresh importations from the school. Another was, that the house was always full of young girls with clean, shining faces; who broke plates and scorched linen, but made an atmosphere of cheerful homely life about the place, good for every one that came within its influence. Mrs. Brown loved young people, and in fact human creatures in general, above plates and linen. They were more like a lot of elder children than servants, and felt to her more as a mother or aunt than as a mistress.

Tom's nurse was one who took in her instruction very slowly—she seemed to have two left hands and no head; and so Mrs. Brown kept her on longer than usual, that she might expend her awkwardness and forgetfulness upon those who would not judge and punish her too strictly for them.

Charity Lamb was her name. It had been the immemorial habit of the village to christen children either by Bible names, or by those of the cardinal and other virtues; so that one was forever hearing in the village street, or on the green, shrill sounds of "Prudence! Prudence! thee cum' out o' the gutter;" or, "Mercy! drat the girl, what bist thee a doin' wi' little Faith?" and there were Ruths, Rachels, Keziahs, in every corner. The same with the boys; there were Benjamins, Jacobs, Noahs, Enochs. I suppose the custom has come down from Puritan times—there it is, at any rate, very strong still in the Vale.

Well, from early morning till dewy eve, when she had it out of him in the cold tub before putting him to bed, Charity and Tom were pitted against one another. Physical power was as yet on the side of Charity, but she hadn't a chance with him where ever head-work was wanted. This war of independence began every morning before breakfast, when Charity escorted her charge to a neighboring farm-house which supplied the Brown's, and where, by his mother's wish, Master Tom went to drink whey before breakfast. Tom had no sort of objection to whey, but he had a decided liking for curds, which were forbidden as unwholesome, and there was seldom a morning that he did not manage to secure a handful of hard curds, in defiance of Charity and the farmer's wife. The latter good soul was a gaunt angular woman, who, with an old black bonnet on the top of her head, the strings dangling about her shoulders, and her gown tucked away through her pocket-holes, went clattering about the dairy, cheese-room, and yard, in high patters. Charity was some sort of niece of the old lady's, and was consequently free of the farm-house and garden, into which she could not resist going for the purposes of gossip and flirtation with the heir apparent, who was a dawdling fellow, never out at work as he ought to have been. The moment Charity had found her cousin, or any other occupation, Tom would slip away; and in a minute shrill cries would be heard from the dairy, "Charity, Charity, thee lazy hussy, where bist?" and Tom would break cover, hands and mouth full of curds, and take refuge on the shaky surface of the great muck reservoir in the middle of the yard, disturbing the repose of the great piza. Here he was in safety, as no grown person could follow without getting over their knees; and the



luckless Charity, while her aunt scolded her from the dairy-door, for being "allus hankering about arter our Willum, instead of minding Master Tom," would descend from threats to coaxing, to lure Tom out of the muck, which was rising over his shoes and would soon tell a tale on his stockings, for which she would be sure to catch it from Missus's mind.

Tom had two abettors in the shape of a couple of old boys, Noah and Benjamin by name, who defended him from Charity, and expended much time upon his education. They were both of them retired servants of former generations of the Browns. Noah Crook was a keen dry old man of almost ninety, but still able to totter about. He talked to Tom quite as if he were one of his own family, and indeed had long completely identified the Browns with himself. In some remote age he had been the attendant of a Miss Brown, and had conveyed her about the country on a pillion. He had a little round picture of the identical gray horse, caparisoned with the identical pillion, before which he used to do a sort of fetish worship, and abuse turnpike roads and carriages. He wore an old full-bottomed wig, the gift of some dandy old Brown whom he had valeted in the middle of last century, which habillament Master Tom looked upon with considerable respect, not to say fear; and indeed his whole feeling towards Noah was strongly tainted with awe: and when the old gentleman was gathered to his fathers, Tom's lamentations over him was not unaccompanied by a certain joy at having seen the last of the wig: "Poor old Noah, dead and gone," said he, "Tom Brown so sorry! Put him in the coffin, wig and all!"

But old Benjy was young Master's real delight and refuge. He was a youth by the side of Noah, scarce seventy years old. A cheery, humorous, kind-hearted old man, full of sixty years of Vale gossip, and of all sorts of helpful ways for young and old, but above all for children. It was he who bent the first pin with which Tom extracted his first stickleback out of "Pebbly Brook," the little stream which ran through the village. The first stickleback was a splendid fellow, with fabulous red and blue gills. Tom kept him in a small basin till the day of his death, and became a fisherman from that day. Within a month from the taking of the first stickleback, Benjy had carried off our hero to the canal, in defiance of Charity; and between them, after a whole afternoon's porjoying, they had caught three or four small coarse fish and a perch, averaging perhaps two and a half ounces each, which Tom bore home in rapture to his mother as a precious gift, and which she received like a true mother with equal rapture, instructing the cook nevertheless, in a private interview, not to prepare the same for the Squire's dinner. Charity had appealed against old Benjy in the mean time, representing the dangers of the canal banks; but Mrs. Brown, seeing the boy's inaptitude for female guidance, had decided in Benjy's favor, and from thenceforth the old man was Tom's dry nurse. And as they sat by the canal watching their little green and white float, Benjy would instruct him in the doings of deceased Browns. How his grandfather, in the early days of the great war, when there was much distress and crime in the Vale, and the magistrates had been threatened by the mob, had ridden in with a big stick in his hand, and held the Petty Sessions by himself. How his great uncle, the Rector, had encountered and laid the last ghost, who had frightened the old women, male and female, of the parish, out of their senses, and who turned out to be the blacksmith's apprentice, disguised in drink and a white sheet. It was Benjy too who saddled Tom's first pony, and instructed him in the mysteries of horsemanship, teaching him to throw his weight back and keep his hand low; and who stood chuckling outside the door of the girl's school when Tom rode his little Shetland into the cottage and round the table, where the old dame and her pupils were seated at their work.

Benjy himself was come of a family distinguished in the Vale for their prowess in all athletic games. Some half-dozen of his brothers and kinsmen had gone to the wars, of whom only one had survived to come home, with a small pension, and three bullets in different parts of his body; he had shared Benjy's cottage till his death, and had left him his old dragoon sword and pistol, which hung over the mantel-piece, flanked by a pair of heavy single-sticks, with which Benjy himself had won renown long ago as an old gamester, against the picked men of Wiltshire and Somersetshire, in many a good bout at the revels and pastimes of the country-side. For he had been a famous back-sword man in his young days, and a good wrestler at elbow and collar.

Back-swording and wrestling were the most serious holiday pursuits of the Vale—those by which men attained fame—and each village had its champion. I suppose that, on the whole, people were less worked than they are now; at any rate, they seemed to have more time and energy for the old pastimes. The great times for back-swording came round once a year in each village, at the feast. The Vale "feasts" were not the common statute feasts, but much more ancient business. They are literally, so far as one can ascertain, feasts of the dedication, i. e., they were first established in the church-yard on the day on which the village church was opened for public worship, which was on the wake or festival of the

patron saint, and have been held on the same day in every year since that time.

There was no longer any remembrance of why the "feast" had been instituted, but nevertheless it had a pleasant and almost sacred character of its own. For it was then that all the children of the village, wherever they were scattered, tried to get home for a holiday to visit their fathers and mothers and friends, bringing with them their wages or some little gift from up the country for the old folk. Perhaps for a day or two before, but at any rate on "feast-day" and the day after, in our village, you might see strapping healthy young men and women from all parts of the country going round from house to house in their best clothes, and finishing up with a call on Madam Brown, whom they would consult as to putting out their earnings to the best advantage, or how best to expend the same for the benefit of the old folk. Every household, however poor, managed to raise a "feast cake" and bottle of ginger or raisin wine, which stood on the cottage table ready for all comers, and not unlikely to make them remember feast time—for feast-cake is very solid and full of huge raisins. Moreover feast-time was the day of reconciliation for the parish. If Job Higgins and Noah Freeman hadn't spoken for the last six months, their "old women" would be sure to get it patched up by that day. And though there was a good deal of drinking and low vice in the booths of an evening, it was pretty well confined to those who would have been doing the like, "feast or no feast;" and, on the whole, the effect was humanizing and Christian. In fact, the only reason why this is not the case still, is that gentlefolk and farmers have taken to other amusements, and have, as usual, forgotten the poor. They don't attend the feast themselves, and call them disreputable, whereupon the steadiest of the poor leave them also, and they become what they are called. Class amusements, be they for dukes or ploughboys, always become nuisances and curses to a country. The true charm of cricket and hunting is, that they are still more or less sociable and universal; there's a place for every man who will come and take his part.

No one in the village enjoyed the approach of "feast day" more than Tom, in the year in which he was taken under old Benjy's tutelage. The feast was held in a large green field at the lower end of the village. The road to Farringdon ran along one side of it, and the brook by the side of the road; and above the brook was another large gentle sloping pasture-land, with a foot-path running down it from the church-yard; and the old church, the originator of all the mirth, towered up with its gray walls and lancet windows, overlooking and sanctioning the whole, though its own share therein had been forgotten. At the point where the foot-path crossed the brook and road, and entered on the field where the feast was held, was a long low roadside inn, and on the opposite side of the field was a large white thatched farm-house, where dwelt an old sporting farmer, a great promoter of the revels.

Past the old church, and down the footpath, pattered the old man and the child hand in hand early in the afternoon of the day before the feast, and wandered all around the ground, which was already being occupied by the "cheap Jacks," with their green-covered carts and marvellous assortment of wares, and the booths of more legitimate small traders with their tempting arrays of fairings and eatables; and penny peep-shows and other shows, containing pink-eyed ladies, and dwarfs, and boa-constrictors, and wild Indians. But the object of most interest to Benjy, and of course to his pupil also, was the stage of rough planks some four feet high, which was being put up by the village carpenter for the back-swording and wrestling; and after surveying the whole tenderly, old Benjy led his charge away to the roadside inn, where he ordered a glass of ale and a long pipe for himself, and discussed these unwonted luxuries on the bench outside in the soft autumn evening with mine host, another old servant of the Browns, and speculated with him on the likelihood of a good show of old gamesters to contend for the morrow's prizes, and told tales of the gallant bouts forty years back, to which Tom listened with all his ears and eyes.

But who shall tell the joy of the next morning, when the church bells were ringing a merry peal, and old Benjy appeared in the servants' hall, resplendent in a long blue coat and brass buttons, and a pair of old yellow buckskins and top-boots, which he had cleaned for and inherited from Tom's grandfather; a stout thornstick in his hand, and a nosegay of pinks and lavender in his button-hole, and led away Tom in his best clothes, and two new shillings in his breeches pockets! These two, at any rate, look like enjoying the day's revel.

They quicken their pace when they get into the church-yard, for already they see the field thronged with country folk, the men in clean white smocks or velvet or fustian coats, with rough plush waistcoats of many colors, and the women in the beautiful long scarlet cloak, the usual outdoor dress of West-country women in those days, and which often descended in families from mother to daughter, or in new-fashioned stuffs, which, if they would but believe it, don't become them half so well. The air resounds with the pipe and tabor, and the drums and trumpets of the showmen shouting at the doors of their caravans, over which tremendous pictures of the wonders to be seen within hang temptingly;

while through all rises the shrill "root-too-too-too" of Mr. Punch, and the unceasing pan-pipe of his satellite.

"Lawk a' massey, Mr. Benjamin," cries a stout motherly woman in a red cloak, as they enter the field, "be that you? Well I never! you do look purely. And how's the Squire, and Madam, and the family?"

Benjy graciously shakes hands with the speaker, who has left our village for some years, but has come over for Feast-day on a visit to an old gossip—and gently indicates the heir apparent of the Browns.

"Bless his little heart! I must gi' un a kiss. Here, Susannah, Susannah!" cries she, raising herself from the embrace, "come and see Mr. Benjamin and young Master Tom. You minds our Sukey, Mr. Benjamin? she be growed a rare slip of a wench since you seen her, tho' her'll be sixteen come Martinmas. I do aim to take her to see Madam to get her a place."

And Sukey comes bounding away from a knot of old schoolfellows, and drops a courtesy to Mr. Benjamin. And elders come up from all parts to salute Benjy, and girls who have been Madam's pupils to kiss Master Tom. And they carry him off to load him with fairings; and he returns to Benjy, his hat and coat covered with ribbons, and his pockets crammed with wonderful boxes which open upon ever new boxes and boxes, and pop-guns and trumpets, and apples, and gilt gingerbread from the stall of Angel Heavens, sole vender thereof, whose booth groans with kings and queens, and elephants, and prancing steeds, all gleaming with gold. There was more gold on Angel's cakes than there is ginger in those of this degenerate age. Skilled diggers might yet make a fortune in the churchyards of the Vale, by carefully washing the dust of the consumers of Angel's gingerbread. Alas! he is with his namesakes, and his receipts have, I fear, died with him.

And then they inspect the penny peep-show, at least Tom does, while old Benjy stands outside and gossips, and walks up the steps, and enters the mysterious doors of the pink-eyed lady and the Irish Giant, who do not by any means come up to their pictures, and the boy will not swallow his rabbit, but there the rabbit is waiting to be swallowed—and what can you expect for tuppence! We are easily pleased in the Vale. Now there is a rush of the crowd, and a tinkling bell is heard, and shouts of laughter; and Master Tom mounts on Benjy's shoulders, and beholds a jingling match in all its glory. The games are begun, and this is the opening of them. It is a quaint game, immensely amusing to look at; and as I don't know whether it is used in your counties, I had better describe it. A large roped ring is made, into which are introduced a dozen or so big boys or young men who mean to play; these are carefully blinded and turned loose into the ring, and then a man is introduced not blindfolded, with a bell hung round his neck, and his two hands tied behind him. Of course, every time he moves the bell must ring, as he has no hand to hold it, and so the dozen blindfolded men have to catch him. This they can not always manage if he is a lively fellow, but half of them always rush into the arms of the other half, or drive their heads together, or tumble over; and then the crowd laughs vehemently, and invents nicknames for them on the spur of the moment, and they, if they be choleric, tear off the handkerchiefs which blind them, and not unfrequently pitch into one another, each thinking that the other must have run against him on purpose. It is great fun to look at a jingling match certainly, and Tom shouts and jumps on old Benjy's shoulders at the sight, until the old man feels weary, and shifts him to the strong young shoulders of the groom, who has just got down to the fun.

And now, while they are climbing the pole, in another part of the field, and muzzling in a flour-tub in another, the old farmer whose house, as has been said, overlooks the field, and who is master of the revels, sets up the steps on to the stage, and announces to all whom it may concern that a half-governor in money will be forthcoming for the old gamester who breaks most heads; to which the Squire and he have added a new hat.

The amount of the prize is sufficient to stimulate the men of the immediate neighborhood, but not enough to bring any very high talent from a distance; so after a glance or two round, a tall fellow, who is a down shepherd, chucks his hat on to the stage and climbs up the steps, looking rather sheepish. The crowd of course first cheer, and then chaff as usual, as he picks up his hat and begins handling the sticks to see which will suit him.

"Wooy, Willum Smith, thee canst play wi' be arra daay," says his companion to the blacksmith's apprentice, a stout young fellow of nineteen or twenty. Willum's sweetheart is in the "feast" somewhere, and has strictly enjoined him not to get his head broke at back-swording, on pain of her highest displeasure; but as she is not to be seen (the women pretend not to like to see the back-sword play, and keep away from the stage), and as his hat is decidedly getting old, he chucks it on the stage, and follows himself, hoping that he will only have to break other people's heads, or that after all Rachel won't really mind.

Then follows the greasy cap lined with fur of a



half-gypsy, poaching, loafing fellow, who travels the Vale not for much good, I fancy:

"Full twenty times was Peter feared—  
For once that Peter was respected,"

in fact. And then three or four more hats, including the glossy castor of Joe Willis, the self-elected and would-be champion of the neighborhood, a well-to-do young butcher of twenty-eight or thereabouts, and a great strapping fellow, with his full allowance of bluster. This is a capital show of gamesters, considering the amount of the prize; so while they are picking their sticks and drawing their lots, I think I must tell you, as shortly as I can, how the noble old game of back-sword is played; for it is sadly gone out of late, even in the Vale, and may be you have never seen it.

The weapon is a good stout ash stick with a large basket handle, heavier and somewhat shorter than a common single-stick. The players are called "old gamesters"—why, I can't tell you—and their object is simply to break one another's heads, for the moment that blood runs an inch anywhere above the eyebrow, the old gamester to whom it belongs is beaten, and has to stop. A very slight blow with the sticks will fetch blood, so that it is by no means a punishing pastime, if the men don't play on purpose and savagely, at the body and arms of their adversaries. The old gamester going into action, only takes off his hat and coat, and arms himself with a stick; he then loops the fingers of his left hand in a handkerchief or strap, which he fastens round his left leg, measuring the length, so that when he draws it tight with his left elbow in the air, that elbow shall just reach as high as his crown. Thus you see, so long as he chooses to keep his left elbow up, regardless of cuts, he has a perfect guard for the left side of his head. Then he advances his right hand above and in front of his head, holding his stick across, so that its point projects an inch or two over his left elbow, and thus his whole head is completely guarded, and he faces his man armed in like manner, and they stand some three feet apart, often nearer, and feint, and strike, and return at one another's heads until one cries "hold," or blood flows; in the first case they are allowed a minute's time, and go on again; in the latter another pair of gamesters are called on. If good men are playing, the quickness of the return is marvellous; you hear the rattle like that a boy makes drawing his stick along palings, only heavier, and the closeness of the men in action to one another gives it a strange interest and makes a spell at backwording a very noble sight.

They are all suited now with sticks, and Joe Willis and the gypsy man have drawn the first lot. So the rest lean against the rails of the stage, and Joe and the dark man meet in the middle, the boards having been strewed with sawdust; Joe's white shirt and spotless drab breeches and boots contrasting with the gypsy's coarse blue shirt and dirty green velvet breeches and leather gaiters. Joe is evidently turning up his nose at the other, and half-insulted at having to break his head.

The gypsy is a tough active fellow, but not very skilful with his weapon, so that Joe's weight and strength tell in a minute; he is too heavy metal for him—whack, whack, whack, come his blows, breaking down the gypsy's guard and threatening to reach his head every moment. There it is at last—"Blood, blood!" shout the spectators, as a thin stream oozes out slowly from the roots of his hair, and the umpire calls to them to stop. The gypsy scowls at Joe under his brows in no pleasant manner, while Master Joe swaggers about and makes attitudes, and thinks himself, and shows that, he thinks himself, the greatest man in the field.

Then follow several stout sets-to between the other candidates for the new hat, and at last come the shepherd and William Smith. This is the crack set-to of the day. They are both in famous wind, and there is no crying "hold;" the shepherd is an old hand, and up to all the dodges; he tries them one after another, and very nearly gets at William's head by coming in near, and playing over his guard at the half-stick, but somehow William blunders through, catching the stick on his shoulders, neck, sides, every now and then, anywhere but on his head, and his returns are heavy and straight, and he is the youngest gamester and a favorite in the parish, and his gallant stand brings down shouts and cheers, and the knowing ones think he'll win if he keeps steady, and Tom on the groom's shoulder holds his hands together, and can hardly breathe for excitement.

Alas for William! his sweetheart getting tired of female companionship has been hunting the booths to see where he can have got to, and now catches sight of him on the stage in full combat. She flushes and turns pale; her old aunt catches hold of her saying, "Bless 'ee, child, don't ee go a'nigst it;" but she breaks away and runs towards the stage calling his name. William keeps up his guard stoutly, but glances for a moment towards the voice. No guard will do it, William, without the eye. The shepherd steps round and strikes, and the point of his stick just grazes William's forehead, fetching off the skin, and the blood flows, and the umpire cries "Hold," and poor William's chance is up for the day. But he takes it very well, and puts on his old hat and coat, and goes down to be scolded by his sweet-

heart, and led away out of mischief. Tom hears him say coaxingly as he walks off—

"Now don't ee, Rachel. I wouldn't ha' done it, only I wanted summat to buy ee a fairing wi, and I be as vlush o' money as a twod o' veathers."

"Thee mind what I tells ee," rejoins Rachel saucily, "and don't ee kep blethering about fairings." Tom resolves in his heart to give William the remainder of his two shillings after the back-swording.

Joe Willis has all the luck to-day. His next bout ends in an easy victory, while the shepherd has a tough job to break his second head; and when Joe and the shepherd meet, and the whole circle expect and hope to see him get a broken crown, the shepherd slips in the first round, and falls against the rails, hurting himself so that the old farmer will not let him go on, much as he wishes to try; and that impostor Joe (for he is certainly not the best man) struts and swaggers about the stage the conquering gamester, though he hasn't had five minutes' really trying play.

Joe takes the new hat in his hand, and puts the money into it, and then, as if a thought strikes him, and he doesn't think his victory quite acknowledged down below, walks to each face of the stage, and looks down, shaking the money, and chaffing, as how he'll stake hat and money and another half-sovereign "agin any gamester as hasn't played already." Cunning Joe! he thus gets rid of William and the shepherd, who is quite fresh again.

No one seems to like the offer, and the umpire is just coming down, when a queer old hat, something like a Doctor of Divinity's shovel, is chucked on to the stage, and an elderly quiet man steps out, who has been watching the play, saying he should like to cross a stick "wi' the prodigalish young chap."

The crowd cheer and begin to chaff Joe who turns up his nose and swaggers across to the sticks. "Imp'dent old wosbird!" says he, "I'll break the bald head on un to the truth."

The old boy is very bald certainly, and the blood will show fast enough if you can touch him, Joe.

He takes off his long-flapped coat, and stands up in a long-flapped waistcoat, which Sir Roger de Coverley might have worn when it was new, picks out a stick, and is ready for Master Joe, who loses no time, but begins his old game, whack, whack, whack, trying to break down the old man's guard by sheer strength. But it won't do—he catches every blow close by the basket; and though he is rather stiff in his returns, after a minute walks Joe about the stage, and is clearly a staunch old gamester. Joe now comes in, and making the most of his height, tries to get over the old man's guard at half-stick, by which he takes a smart blow in the ribs and another on the elbow and nothing more. And now he loses wind and begins to puff, and the crowd laugh: "Cry, 'hold,' Joe—thee's't met thy match!" Instead of taking good advice and getting his wind, Joe loses his temper, and strikes at the old man's body.

"Blood, blood!" shout the crowd, "Joe's head's broke!"

Who'd have thought it! How did it come! That body-blow left Joe's head unguarded for a moment, and with one turn of the wrist the old gentleman has picked a neat little bit of skin off the middle of his forehead; and though he won't believe it, and hammers on for three more blows despite of the shouts, is then convinced by the blood trickling into his eyes. Poor Joe is sadly crestfallen, and fumbles in his pockets for the other half-sovereign, but the old gamester won't have it. "Keep the money, man, and gi's thy hand," says he, and they shake hands; but the old gamester gives the new hat to the shepherd, and, soon after, the half-sovereign to William, who thereout decorates his sweetheart with ribbons to his heart's content.

"Who can a be?" "Wur do a cum from?" ask the crowd. And it soon flies about that the old west-country champion, who played a tie with Shaw the life-guardsmen at "Vizes" twenty years before, has broken Joe Willis's crown for him.

How my country fair is spinning out! I see I must skip the wrestling, and the boys jumping in sacks, and rolling wheelbarrows blindfolded; and the donkey-race, and the fight which arose thereout, marring the otherwise peaceful "veast," and the frightened scurrying away of the female feast-goers, and descent of Squire Brown, summoned by the wife of one of the combatants to stop it; which he wouldn't start to do till he had got on his top-boots. Tom is carried away by old Benjy, dog-tired and surfeited with pleasure, as the evening comes on and the dancing begins in the booths; and though William and Rachel in her new ribbons and many another good lad and lass don't come away just yet, but have a good step out, and enjoy it, and get no harm thereby, yet we, being sober folk, will just stroll away up through the church-yard, and by the old ewe-tree; and get a quiet dish of tea and a parle with our gossip, as the steady ones of our village do, and so to bed.

That's the fair true sketch as far as it goes, of one of the larger village feasts in the Vale of Berks, when I was a little boy. They are much altered for the worse, I am told. I haven't been at one these twenty years, but I have been at the statute fairs in some west-country towns, where servants are hired, and greater abominations can not be found. What village feasts have come to, I

fear, in many cases, may be read in the pages of Yeast (though I never saw one so bad—whack God)!

Do you want to know why? It is because, as I said before, gentlefolk and farmers have left off joining or taking an interest in them. They don't either subscribe to the prizes, or even attend and enjoy the fun.

Is this a good or a bad sign? I hardly know. Bad, sure enough, if it only arises from the further separation of classes consequent on twenty years' buying cheap and selling dear, and its accompanying over-work; or because our sons and daughters have their hearts in London Club-life, or so-called Society, instead of in the old English home-duties; because farmers' sons are aping fine gentlemen, and farmers' daughters caring more to make bad foreign music than good English cheeses. Good, perhaps, if it be that the time for the old "veast" has gone by, that it is no longer the healthy, sound expression of English country holiday-making; that, in fact, we as a nation have got beyond it, and are in a transition state, feeling for and soon likely to find some better substitute.

Only I have just got this to say before I quit the text. Don't let reformers of any sort think that they are going really to lay hold of the working boys and young men of England by any educational grapple whatever, which hasn't some *bona fide* equivalent for the games of the old country "veast" in it; something to put in the place of the back-swording and wrestling and racing; something to try the muscles of men's bodies, and the endurance of their hearts, and to make them rejoice in their strength. In all the new-fangled comprehensive plans which I see, this is all left out; and the consequence is, that your great Mechanics' Institutes end in intellectual priggism, and your Christian Young Men's Societies in religious Pharisaism.

Well, well. We must bide our time. Life isn't all beer and skittles—but beer and skittles, or something better of the same sort, must form a good part of every Englishman's education. If I could only drive this into the heads of you rising Parliamentary Lords, and young swells who "have your ways made for you," as the saying is—you, who frequent palaver houses and West-end clubs, waiting always ready to strap yourselves on to the back of poor dear old John, as soon as the present used-up lot (your fathers and uncles), who sit there on the great Parliamentary majorities' pack-saddle, and make believe they're guiding him with their red-tape bridle, tumble, or have to be lifted off.

I don't think much of you yet—I wish I could; though you do go talking and lecturing up and down the country to crowded audiences, and are busy with all sorts of philanthropic intellectualism, and circulating libraries and museums, and Heaven only knows what besides; and try to make us think, through newspaper reports, that you are, even as we, of the working classes. But, bless your hearts, we "we ain't so green;" though lots of us of all sorts toady you enough certainly, and try to make you think so.

I'll tell you what to do now: instead of all this trumpeting and fuss, which is only the old Parliamentary-majority dodge over again—just you go, each of you (you've plenty of time for it, if you'll only give up t'other line) and quietly make three or four friends, real friends, among us. You'll find a little trouble in getting at the right sort because such birds don't come lightly to your lure—but found they may be. Take, say, two out of the professions, lawyer, parson, doctor,—which you will; one out of trade, and three or four out of the working classes, tailors, engineers, carpenters, engravers—there's plenty of choice. Let them be men of your own ages, mind, and ask them to your homes; introduce them to your wives and sisters, and get introduced to theirs; give them good dinners, and talk to them about what is really at the bottom of your hearts, and box, and run, and row with them, when you have a chance. Do all this honestly as man to man, and by the time you come to ride old John, you'll be able to do something more than sit on his back, and may feel his mouth with some stronger bridle than a red tape one.

Ah, if you only would! But you have got too far out of the right rut, I fear. Too much over-civilization and the deceitfulness of riches. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. More's the pity. I never came across but two of you who could value a man wholly and solely for what was in him; who thought themselves verily and indeed of the same flesh and blood as John Jones the attorney's clerk, and Bill Smith the costermonger, and could act as if they thought so.

## CHAPTER III.

### SUNDRY WARS AND ALLIANCES.

Poor old Benjy! the "rheumatiz" has much to answer for all through English country-sides, but it never played a sourvire trick than in Maying—thee by the heels, when thou wast vet in a green age. The enemy which has long been carrying on a sort of border warfare, and trying his strength against Benjy's on the battle-field of his hands and legs, now, mustering all his forces, began laying siege to the citadel, and overrunning the whole country. Benjy was seized in the back and loins; and though he made strong and brave



fight. It was soon clear enough that all which could be beaten of poor old Benjy would have to give in before long.

It was as much as he could do now, with his big stick and frequent stops, to hobble down to the canal with Master Tom, and bait his hook for him, and sit and watch him angling, telling him quaint old country stories; and when Tom had no sport, and detecting a rat some hundred yards or so off along the bank, would rush off with Toby, the turnspit terrier, his other faithful companion, in bootless pursuit, he might have tumbled in and been drowned twenty times over before Benjy could have got near him.

Cheery and unmindful of himself as Benjy was, this loss of locomotive power bothered him greatly. He had got a new object in his old age, and was just beginning to think himself useful again in the world. He feared much, too, lest Master Tom should fall back again into the hands of Charity and the women. So he tried every thing he could think of to get set up. He even went an expedition to the dwelling of one of these queer mortals, who—say what we will, and reason how we will—do cure simple people of diseases of one kind or another without the aid of physic; and so get to themselves the reputation of using charms, and inspire for themselves and their dwellings great respect, not to say fear, amongst a simple folk such as the dwellers in the Vale of White Horse. Where this power, or whatever else it may be, descends upon the shoulders of a man whose ways are not straight, he becomes a nuisance to the neighborhood; a receiver of stolen goods, giver of love-potions, and deceiver of silly women; the avowed enemy of law and order, of justices of the peace, head-boroughs, and game-keepers—such a man in fact as was recently caught tripping, and deservedly dealt with by the Leeds justices for seducing a girl who had come to him to get back a faithless lover, and has been convicted of bigamy since then. Sometimes, however, they are of quite a different stamp, men who pretend to nothing, and are with difficulty persuaded to exercise their occult arts in the simplest cases.

Of this latter sort was Old Farmer Ives, as he was called, the "wise man" to whom Benjy resorted (taking Tom with him as usual), in the early spring of the year next after the feast described in the last chapter. Why he was called "farmer" I can not say, unless it be that he was the owner of a cow, a pig or two, and some poultry, which he maintained on about an acre of land inclosed from the middle of a wild common, on which probably his father had squatted before lords of manors looked as keenly after their rights as they do now. Here he had lived no one knew how long, a solitary man. It was often rumored that he was to be turned out and his cottage pulled down, but somehow it never came to pass; and his pigs and cow went grazing on the common, and his geese hissed at the passing children and at the heels of the horse of my lord's steward, who often rode by with a covetous eye on the inclosure, still unmolested. His dwelling was some miles from our village; so Benjy, who was half ashamed of his errand, and wholly unable to walk there, had to exercise much ingenuity to get the means of transporting himself and Tom thither without exciting suspicion. However, one fine May morning he managed to borrow the old blind pony of our friend the publican, and Tom persuaded Madam Brown to give him a holiday to spend with old Benjy, and to lend them the Squire's light cart, stored with bread and cold meat and a bottle of ale. And so the two in high glee started behind old Dobbin, and jogged along the deep-rutted plashy roads, which had not been mended after their winter's wear, towards the dwelling of the wizard. About noon they passed the gate which opened on to the large common, and old Dobbin toiled slowly up the hill, while Benjy pointed out a little deep dingle on the left, out of which welled a tiny stream. As they crept up the hill the tops of a few birch-trees came in sight, and blue smoke curling up through their delicate light boughs; and then the little white thatched home and inclosed ground of Farmer Ives, lying cradled in the dingle, with the gay gorse common rising behind and on both sides; while in front, after traversing a gentle slope, the eye might travel for miles and miles over the rich vale. They now left the main road and struck into a green track over the common, marked lightly with wheel and horse-shoe, which led down into the dingle and stopped at the rough gate of Farmer Ives. Here they found the farmer, an iron-gray old man, with a bushy eyebrow and strong aquiline nose, busied in one of his vocations. He was a horse and cow doctor, and was tending a sick beast which had been sent up to be cured. Benjy hailed him as an old friend, and he returned the greeting cordially enough, looking, however, hard for a moment both at Benjy and Tom, to see whether there was more in their visit than appeared at first sight. It was a work of some difficulty and danger for Benjy to reach the ground, which, however, he managed to do without mishap; and then he devoted himself to unharnessing Dobbin, and turning him out for a graze ("a run" one could not say of a virtuous steed) on the common. This done, he extricated the cold provisions from the cart, and they entered the farmer's wicket; and he, shutting up the knife with which he was taking maggots out of the cow's back and sides, accompanied them toward the cottage. A big old lurcher got up slowly from

the door-stone, stretching first one hind leg and then the other, and taking Tom's caresses and the presence of Toby, who kept, however, at a respectful distance, with equal indifference.

"Us be cum to pay ee a visit. I've a been long minded to do't for old sake's sake, only I vinds I dwont get about now as I'd used to't. I be so plaugy bad wi'th' rumatiz in my back." Benjy paused, in hopes of drawing the farmer at once on the subject of his ailments without further direct application.

"Ah, I see as you bean't quite so lissom as you was," replied the father with a grim smile, as he lifted the latch of his door; "we bean't so young as we was, nother on us, wuss luck."

The farmer's cottage was very like those of the better class of peasantry in general. A snug chimney-corner with two seats and a small carpet on the hearth, an old flint gun and a pair of spurs over the fireplace, a dresser with shelves on which some bright pewter plates and crockery-ware were arranged, an old walnut table, a few chairs and settees, some framed samplers, and an old print or two, and a bookcase with some dozen volumes on the walls, a rack with fitches of bacon, and other stores fastened to the ceiling, and you have the best part of the furniture. No sign of occult art is to be seen, unless the bundles of dried herbs hanging to the rack and in the angle, and the row of labeled vials on one of the shelves, betoken it.

Tom played about with some kittens who occupied the hearth, and with a goat who walked demurely in at the open door, while their host and Benjy spread the table for dinner—and was soon engaged in conflict with the cold meat to which he did much honor. The two old men's talk was of old comrades and their deeds, mute inglorious Miltons of the Vale, and of the doings thirty years back—which didn't interest him much except when they spoke of the making of the canal, and then, indeed, he began to listen with all his ears; and learned to his no small wonder, that his dear and wonderful canal had not been there always—was not in fact, as old as Benjy or Farmer Ives, which caused a strange commotion in his small brain.

After dinner Benjy called attention to a wart which Tom had on the knuckles of his hand, and which the family doctor had been trying his skill on without success, and begged the farmer to charm it away. Farmer Ives looked at it, muttered something or another over it, and cut some notches in a short stick which he handed to Benjy, giving him instructions for cutting it down on certain days, and cautioning Tom not to meddle with the wart for a fortnight. And then they strolled out and sat on a bench in the sun with their pipes, and the pigs came up and grunted sociably, and let Tom scratch them; and the farmer, seeing how he liked animals, stood up and held his arms in the air and gave a call which brought a flock of pigeons wheeling and dashing through the birch trees. They settled down in clusters on the farmer's arms and shoulders, making love to him and scrambling over one another's backs to get to his face; and then he threw them all off and they fluttered about close by, and lighted on him again and again, when he held up his arms. All the creatures about the place were clean and fearless, quite unlike their relations elsewhere; and Tom begged to be taught how to make all the pigs and cows and poultry in our village tame, at which the farmer only gave one of his grim chuckles.

It wasn't till they were just ready to go, and old Dobbin was harnessed, that Benjy broached the subject of his rheumatism again, detailing his symptoms, one by one. Poor old boy! He hoped the farmer could charm it away as easily as he could Tom's wart, and was ready with equal faith to put another notched stick into his other pocket, for the cure of his own ailments. The physician shook his head, but nevertheless produced a bottle and handed it to Benjy with instructions for use. "Not as t'll do ee much good—leastways I be afeared not," shading his eyes with his hand, and looking up at them in the cart; "there's only one thing as I knows on, as'll cure old folks like you and I o'th' rheumatia."

"Wot be that, then, farmer?" inquired Benjy.

"Church-yard mould," said the old iron-gray man with another chuckle. And so they said their good-byes and went their ways home. Tom's wart was gone in a fortnight, but not so Benjy's rheumatism, which laid him by the heels more and more. And though Tom still spent many an hour with him, as he sat on a bench in the sunshine, or by the chimney corner when it was cold, he soon had to seek elsewhere for his regular companions.

Tom had been accustomed often to accompany his mother in her visits to the cottages, and had thereby made acquaintance with many of the village boys of his own age. There was Job Rudkin, son of widow Rudkin, the most bustling woman in the parish. How she could ever have had such a stolid boy as Job for a child, must always remain a mystery. The first time Tom went to their cottage with his mother, Job was not indoors, but he entered soon after, and stood with both hands in his pockets staring at Tom. Widow Rudkin, who would have had to cross Adam to get at young Hopeful—a breach of good manners of which she was wholly incapable—began a series of pantomime signs which only puzzled him, and at last, unable to contain herself long-

er, burst out with, "Job! Job! where's thy cap?"

"What! beant ee on ma' head, mother?" replied Job, slowly extricating one hand from a pocket, and feeling for the article in question; which he found on his head sure enough, and left there, to his mother's horror and Tom's great delight.

Then there was poor Jacob Dodson, the half-witted boy, who ambled about cheerfully, undertaking messages and little helpful odds and ends for every one, which, however, poor Jacob managed always hopelessly to embrangle. Every thing came to pieces in his hands, and nothing would stop in his head. They nicknamed him Jacob Doodle-calf.

But above all there was Harry Winburn, the quickest and best boy in the parish. He might be a year older than Tom, but was very little bigger, and he was the very Crichton of our village boys. He could wrestle and climb and run better than all the rest, and learned all that the schoolmaster could teach him faster than that worthy at all liked. He was a boy to be proud of, with his curly brown hair, keen gray eye, straight active figure, and little ears and hands and feet—"as fine as a lord's," as Charity remarked to Tom one day, talking as usual great nonsense. Lords' hands and ears and feet are just as ugly as other folks' when they are children, as any one may convince themselves if they like to look. Tight boots and gloves, and doing nothing with them, I allow make a difference by the time they are twenty.

Now that Benjy was laid on the shelf, and his young brothers were still under petticoat government, Tom, in search of companions, began to cultivate the village boys generally more and more. Squire Brown he it said, was a true blue Tory to the backbone, and believed honestly that the powers which be were ordained of God and that loyalty and steadfast obedience were men's first duties. Whether it were in consequence or in spite of his political creed, I do not mean to give an opinion, though I have one; but certain it is that he held therewith divers social principles not generally supposed to be true blue in color. Foremost of these and the one which the Squire loved to propound above all others, was the belief that a man is to be valued wholly and solely for that which he is in himself, for that which stands up in the four fleshy walls of him apart from clothes, rank, fortune, and all externals whatsoever. Which belief I take to be a wholesome corrective of all political opinions, and if held sincerely, to make all opinions equally harmless, whether they be blue, red, or green. As a necessary corollary to this belief, Squire Brown held further that it didn't matter a straw whether his son associated with lord's sons or ploughmen's sons, provided they were brave and honest. He himself had played foot-ball and gone bird's-nesting with the farmers whom he met at vestry and the laborers who tilled their fields, and so had his father and grandfather with their progenitors. So he encouraged Tom in his intimacy with the boys of the village, and forwarded it by all means in his power, and gave them the run of a close for a playground, and provided bats and balls and a foot-ball for their sports.

Our village was blessed amongst other things, with a well-endowed school. The building stood by itself, apart from the master's house, on an angle of ground where three roads met; an old gray stone building, with a steep roof and mullioned windows. On one of the opposite angles stood Squire Brown's stables and kennel, with their backs to the road, over which towered a great elm tree; on the third stood the village carpenter and wheelwright's large open shop, and his house and the schoolmaster's, with long low eaves under which the swallows built by scores.

The moment Tom's lessons were over, he would now get him down to this corner by the stables, and watch till the boys came out of school. He prevailed on the groom to cut notches for him in the bark of the elm, so that he could climb into the lower branches, and there he would sit watching the school door, and speculating on the possibility of turning the elm into a dwelling-place for himself and friends after the manner of the Swiss Family Robinson.

But the school hours were long and Tom's patience short, so that he soon began to descend into the street and go and peep in at the school-door and the wheelwright's shop, and look out for something to while away the time. Now the wheelwright was a choleric man, and one fine afternoon, returning from a short absence, found Tom occupied with one of his pet adzes, the edge of which was fast vanishing under our hero's care. A speedy flight saved Tom from all but one sound cuff on the ears, but he resented this unjustifiable interruption of his first essays at carpentering, and still more the further proceedings of the wheelwright, who cut a switch and hung it over the door of his workshop, threatening to use it upon Tom if he came within twenty yards of his gate. So Tom, to retaliate, commenced a war upon the swallows who dwelt under the wheelwright's eaves, whom he harassed with sticks and stones, and being fleet of foot than his enemy, escaped all punishment, and kept him in perpetual anger. Moreover his presence about the school-door began to incense the master, as the boys in that neighborhood neglected their lessons in consequence; and more than once he issued into the porch, red in hand, just as Tom beat a hasty retreat. And he and the wheelwright, laying their heads together,



resolved to acquaint the Squire with Tom's afternoon occupations, but, in order to do it with effect, determined to take him captive and lead him away to judgment fresh from his evil doings. This they would have found some difficulty in doing, had Tom continued the war single-handed, or rather single-footed, for he would have taken to the deepest part of Pebbly Brook to escape them; but, like other active powers, he was ruined by his alliances. Poor Jacob Doodle-calf could not go to the school with the other boys, and one fine afternoon, about three o'clock (the school broke up at four), Tom found him ambling about the street, and pressed him into a visit to the school-porch. Jacob, always ready to do what he was asked, consented, and the two stole down to the school together. Tom first reconnoitered the wheelwright's shop, and seeing no signs of activity, thought all safe in that quarter, and ordered at once an advance of all his troops upon the school-porch. The door of the school was ajar, and the boys seated on the nearest bench at once recognized and opened a correspondence with the invaders. Tom, waxing bold, kept putting his head into the school and making faces at the master when his back was turned. Poor Jacob, not in the least comprehending the situation, and in high glee at finding himself so near the school, which he had never been allowed to enter, suddenly, in a fit of enthusiasm, pushed by Tom, and ambling three steps into the school, stood there, looking round him and nodding with a self-approving smile. The master, who was stooping over a boy's slate, with his back to the door, became aware of something unusual, and turned quickly round. Tom rushed at Jacob, and began dragging him back by his smock-frock, and the master mad at them, scattering forms and boys in his career. Even now they might have escaped, but that in the porch, barring retreat, appeared the crafty wheelwright, who had been watching all their proceedings. So they were seized, the school dismissed, and Tom and Jacob led away to Squire Brown as lawful prize, the boys following to the gate in groups, and speculating on the result.

The Squire was very angry at first, but the interview, by Tom's pleading, ended in a compromise. Tom was not to go near the school till three o'clock, and only then if he had done his own lessons well, in which case he was to be the bearer of a note to the master from Squire Brown, and the master agreed in such case to release ten or twelve of the best boys an hour before the time of breaking up, to go off and play in the close. The wheelwright's adzes and swallows were to be forever respected; and that hero and the master withdrew to the servant's hall, to drink the Squire's health, well satisfied with their day's work.

The second act of Tom's life may now be said to have begun. The war of independence had been over for some time; none of the women now, not even his mother's maid, dared offer to help him in dressing or washing. Between ourselves, he had often at first to run to Benjy in an unfinished state of toilet; Charity and the rest of them seemed to take a delight in putting impossible buttons and ties in the middle of his back; but he would have gone without neither integuments altogether, sooner than have had recourse to female valeting. He had a room to himself, and his father gave him sixpence a week pocket-money. All this he had achieved by Benjy's advice and assistance. But now he had conquered another step in life, the step which all real boys so long to make; he had got amongst his equals in age and strength, and could measure himself with other boys; he lived with those whose pursuits and wishes and ways were the same in kind as his own.

The little governess who had been lately installed in the house found her work grew wonderfully easy, for Tom slaved at his lessons in order to make sure of his note to the schoolmaster. So there were very few days in the week in which Tom and the village boys were not playing in their close by three o'clock. Prisoner's base, rounders, high-cock-a-lorum, cricket, football, he was soon initiated into the delights of them all; and though most of the boys were older than himself, he managed to hold his own very well. He was naturally active and strong, and quick of eye and hand, and had the advantage of light shoes and well-fitting dress, so that in a short time he could run and jump and climb with any of them.

They generally finished their regular games half an hour or so before tea-time, and then began trials of skill and strength in many ways. Some of them would catch the Shetland pony who was turned out in the field, and get two or three on his back, and the little rogue, enjoying the fun, would gallop off for fifty yards and then turn round, or stop short and shoot them on the turf, and then graze quietly on till he felt another load; others played at peg-top or marbles, while a few of the bigger ones stood up for a bout at wrestling. Tom at first only looked on at this pastime, but it had peculiar attractions for him, and he could not long keep out of it. Elbow and collar wrestling as practised in the western counties was, next to back-swording, the way to fame for the youth of the Vale; and all the boys knew the rules of it, and were more or less expert. But Job Rudkin and Harry Winburn were the stars, the former stiff and sturdy, with legs like small towers, the latter pliant as india-rubber and quick as lightning. Day after day they stood foot to foot, and offered first one hand and then the other, and grappled

and closed and awayed and strained, till a well-aimed crook of the heel or thrust of the loin took effect, and a fair backfall ended the matter. And Tom watched with all his eyes, and first challenged one of the less scientific, and threw him; and so one by one wrestled his way up to the leaders.

Then indeed for months he had a poor time of it; it was not long indeed before he could manage to keep his legs against Job, for that hero was slow of offense, and gained his victories chiefly by allowing others to throw themselves against his immovable legs and loins. But Harry Winburn was undeniably his master; from the first clutch of hands when they stood up, down to the last trip which sent him on to his back on the turf, he felt that Harry knew more and could do more than he. Luckily, Harry's bright unconsciousness, and Tom's natural good temper, kept them from quarrelling; and so Tom worked on and on, and trod more and more nearly on Harry's heels, and at last mastered all the dodges and falls except one. This one was Harry's own particular invention and pet; he scarcely ever used it except when hard pressed, but then out it came, and, as sure as it did, over went poor Tom. He thought about that fall at his meals, in his walks, when he lay awake in bed, in his dreams—but all to no purpose; until Harry one day in his open way suggested to him how he thought it should be met, and in a week from that time the boys were equal, save only the slight difference of strength in Harry's favor, which some extra ten months of age gave. Tom had often afterwards reason to be thankful for that early drilling, and above all for having mastered Harry Winburn's fall.

Besides their home games on Saturdays the boys would wander all over the neighborhood; sometimes to the downs or up to the camp, where they cut their initials out in the springy turf, and watched the hawks soaring, and the "peert" bird, as Harry Winburn called the gray plover, gorgeous in his wedding feathers; and so home, racing down the Manger with many a roll among the thistles, or through Uffington-wood to watch the fox-cubs playing in the green rides; sometimes to Rosy Brook to cut long whispering reeds which grew there, to make pan-pipes of; sometimes to Moor Mills, where was a piece of old forest land, with short browsed turf and tufted brambly thickets stretching under the oaks, amongst which rumor declared that a raven, last of his race, still lingered; or to the sand-hills, in vain quest of rabbits; and birds'-nesting, in the season, anywhere and everywhere.

The few neighbors of the Squire's own rank every now and then would shrug their shoulders as they drove or rode by a party of boys with Tom in the middle, carrying along bulrushes or whispering reeds, or great bundles of cowslip and meadow-sweet, or young starlings or magpies, or other spoil of wood, brook or meadow; and Lawyer Red-tape might mutter to Squire Straightback at the Board, that no good would come of the young Browns, if they were let run wild with all the dirty village boys, whom the best farmers' sons even would not play with. And the Squire might reply with a shake of his head, that his sons only mixed with their equals, and never went into the village without the governor or a footman. But, luckily, Squire Brown was fully as stiff-backed as his neighbors, and so went on his own way; and Tom and his younger brothers, as they grew up, went on playing with the village boys, without the idea of equality or inequality (except in wrestling, running, and climbing), ever entering their heads, as it doesn't till it's put there by Jack Nastys or fine ladies' maids.

I don't mean to say it would be the case in all villages, but it certainly was so in this one; the village boys were full as manly and honest, and certainly purer than those in a higher rank; and Tom got more harm from his equals in his first fortnight at a private school where he went when he was nine years old, than he had from his village friends from the day he left Charity's apron-strings.

Great was the grief amongst the village school-boys when Tom drove off with the Squire, one August morning to meet the coach on his way to school. Each of them had given him some little present of the best that he had, and his small private box was full of peg-tops, white marbles—called "alley-taws" in the Vale,—scrows, birds' eggs, whip-cord, jews'-harps, and other miscellaneous boys' wealth. Poor Jacob Doodle-calf, in floods of tears, had pressed upon him, in spluttering earnestness, his lame pet hedgehog,—he had always some broken down beast or bird by him;—but this Tom had been obliged to refuse by the Squire's order. He had given them all a great tea under the big elm in their playground, for which Madam Brown had supplied the biggest cake ever seen in our village; and Tom was really as sorry to leave them as they to lose him, but his sorrow was not unmixed with the pride and excitement of making a new step in life.

And this feeling carried him through his first parting with his mother better than could have been expected. Their love was as fair and whole as human love can be, perfect self-sacrifice on the one side, meeting a young and true heart on the other. It is not within the scope of my book, however, to speak of family relations, or I should have much to say on the subject of English mothers—aye, and of English fathers, and sisters, and brothers, too.

Neither have I room to speak of our private schools: what I have to say is about public schools, those much-abused and much-belanded institutions peculiar to England. So we must hurry through Master Tom's year at a private school as fast as we can.

It was a fair average specimen, kept by a gentleman, with another gentleman as second master; but it was little enough of the real work they did—merely coming into school when lessons were prepared and all ready to be heard. The whole discipline of the school out of lesson hours was in the hands of the two ushers, one of whom was always with the boys in their playground, in the school, at meals—in fact, at all times and everywhere, till they were fairly in bed at night.

Now the theory of private schools is (or was) constant supervision out of school; therein differing fundamentally from that of public schools.

It may be right or wrong; but if right, this supervision surely ought to be the especial work of the head-master, the responsible person. The object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens; and by far the most important part of that work must be done, or not done, out of school hours. To leave it, therefore, in the hands of inferior men, is just giving up the highest and hardest part of the work of education. Were I a private schoolmaster, I should say, let who will hear the boys their lessons, but let me live with them when they are at play and rest.

The two ushers at Tom's first school were not gentlemen and were very poorly educated, and were only driving their poor trade of usher to get such living as they could out of it. They were not bad men, but had little heart for their work, and, of course, were bent on making it as easy as possible. One of the methods by which they endeavored to accomplish this was by encouraging tale-bearing, which had become a frightfully common vice in the school in consequence, and had sapped all the foundations of school morality. Another was, by favoring grossly the biggest boys, who alone could have given them much trouble; whereby those young gentlemen became most abominable tyrants, oppressing the little boys in all the small, mean ways which prevail in private schools.

Poor little Tom was made dreadfully unhappy in his first week, by a catastrophe which happened to his first letter home. With huge labor he had, on the very evening of his arrival, managed to fill two sides of a sheet of letter-paper with the assurances of his love for dear mamma, his happiness at school, and his resolves to do all she would wish. This missive, with the help of the boy who sat at the desk next him, also a new arrival, he managed to fold successfully; but this done, they were sadly put to it for means of sealing.

Envelopes were then unknown, they had no wax, and dared not disturb the stillness of the evening school-room by getting up and going to the usher for some. At length, Tom's friend, being of an ingenious turn of mind, suggested sealing with ink, and the letter was accordingly stuck down with a blob of ink, and duly handed by Tom, on his way to bed, to the housekeeper to be posted. It was not till four days afterwards that the good dame sent for him, and produced the precious letter and some wax, saying, "Oh, Master Brown, I forgot to tell you before, but your letter isn't sealed." Poor Tom took the wax in silence and sealed his letter, with a huge lump rising in his throat during the process, and then ran away to a quiet corner of the playground, and burst into an agony of tears. The idea of his mother waiting day after day for the letter he had promised her at once, and perhaps thinking him forgetful of her, when he had done all in his power to make good his promise, was as bitter a grief as any which he had to undergo for many a long year. His wrath then was proportionately violent when he was aware of two boys, who stopped close by him, and one of whom, a fat gaby of a fellow, pointed at him and called him "Young mammy-sick!" Whereupon Tom arose, and giving vent thus to his grief and rage, smote his derider on the nose, and made it bleed—which sent that young worthy howling to the usher, who reported Tom for violent and unprovoked assault and battery. Hitting in the face was a felony punishable with flogging, other hitting only a misdemeanor—a distinction not altogether clear in principle. Tom, however, escaped the penalty by pleading "primum tempus;" and having written a second letter to his mother, inclosing some forget-me-nots, which he picked on their first half-holiday walk, felt quite happy again, and began to enjoy vastly a good deal of his new life.

These half-holiday walks were the great events of the week. The whole fifty boys started after dinner with one of the ushers for Hazeldown, which was distant some mile or so from the school. Hazeldown measured some three miles round, and in the neighborhood were several woods full of all manner of birds and butterflies. The usher walked slowly round the down with such boys as liked to accompany him; the rest scattered in all directions being only bound to appear again when the usher had completed his round, and accompany him home. They were forbidden, however, to go anywhere except on the down and into the woods; the village had been especially prohibited, where huge bulls'-eyes



and unctuous toffee might be procured in exchange for coin of the realm.

Various were the amusements to which the boys then betook themselves. At the entrance of the down there was a steep hillock, like the barrows of Tom's own downs. This mound was the weekly scene of terrific combats, at a game called by the queer name of "mud-patties." The boys who played divided into sides under different leaders, and one side occupied the mound. Then all parties having provided themselves with many sods of turf, cut with their bread-and-cheese knives, the side which remained at the bottom proceeded to assault the mound, advancing up on all sides under cover of a heavy fire of turfs, and then struggling for victory with the occupants, which was theirs as soon as they could, even for a moment, clear the summit, when they in turn became the besieged. It was a good rough dirty game, and of great use in counteracting the sneaking tendencies of the school. Then others of the boys spread over the downs, looking for the holes of humble-bees and mice, which they dug up without mercy, often (I regret to say) killing and skinning the unlucky mice, and (I do not regret to say) getting well stung by the humble-bees. Others went after butterflies and birds'-eggs in their season; and Tom found on Hazeldown, for the first time, the beautiful little blue butterfly with golden spots on its wings, which he had never seen on his own downs, and dug out his first sand-martin's nest. This latter achievement resulted in a flogging, for the sand-martins built in a high bank close to the village, consequently out of bounds; but one of the bolder spirits of the school, who never could be happy unless he was doing something to which risk attached, easily persuaded Tom to break bounds and visit the martin's bank. From whence it being only a step to the toffee shop, what could be more simple than to go on there and fill their pockets? or what more certain than that on their return, a distribution of treasure having been made, the usher should shortly detect the forbidden smell of bull's-eyes, and, a search ensuing, discover the state of the breeches-pockets of Tom and his ally?

This ally of Tom's was indeed a desperate hero in the sight of the boys, and feared as one who dealt in magic, or something approaching thereto, which reputation came to him in this wise. The boys went to bed at eight, and of course consequently lay awake in the dark for an hour or two, telling ghost stories by turns. One night when it came to his turn, and he had dried up their souls by his story, he suddenly declared that he would make a fiery hand appear on the door; and, to the astonishment and terror of the boys in his room, a hand, or something like it, in pale light, did then and there appear. The fame of this exploit having spread to the other rooms, and being discredited there, the young necromancer declared that the same wonder would appear in all the rooms in turn, which it accordingly did, and the whole circumstance having been privately reported to one of the ushers as usual, that functionary, after listening about at the doors of the rooms, by a sudden descent, caught the performer in his night-suit, with a box of phosphorus in his guilty hand. Lucifer-matches and all the present facilities for getting acquainted with fire were then unknown; the very name of phosphorus had something diabolic in it to the boy-mind; so Tom's ally, at the cost of a sound flogging, earned what many older folks covet much—the very decided fear of most of his companions.

He was a remarkable boy, and by no means a bad one. Tom stuck to him till he left, and got into many scrapes by so doing. But he was the great opponent of the tale-bearing habits of the school, and the open enemies of the ushers; and so worthy of all support.

Tom imbibed a fair amount of Latin and Greek at the school, but somehow on the whole it didn't suit him, or he it, and in the holidays he was constantly working the Squire to send him at once to a public school. Great was his joy, then, when in the middle of his third half-year, in October 183—, a fever broke out in the village; and the master having himself slightly sickened of it, the whole of the boys were sent off at a day's notice to their respective homes.

The Squire was not so pleased as Master Tom to see that young gentleman's brown merry face appear at home, some two months before the proper time, for the Christmas holidays; and so, after putting on his thinking cap, he retired to his study and wrote several letters, the result of which was, that one morning at the breakfast-table, about a fortnight after Tom's return, he addressed his wife with—"My dear, I have arranged that Tom shall go to Rugby at once, for the last six weeks of this half-year, instead of wasting them, riding and loitering about home. It is very kind of the Doctor to allow it. Will you see that his things are all ready by Friday, when I shall take him up to town, and send him down the next day by himself!"

Mrs. Brown was prepared for the announcement, and merely suggested a doubt whether Tom were yet old enough to travel by himself. However, finding both father and son against her on this point, she gave in like a wise woman, and proceeded to prepare Tom's kit for his launch into a public school.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Now, sir, time to get up, if you please. Tally-

ho coach for Leicester'll be round in half an hour, and don't wait for nobody." So spake the Boots of the Peacock Inn, Islington, at half-past two o'clock on the morning of a day in the early part of November, 183—, giving Tom at the same time a shake by the shoulder, and then putting down a candle and carrying off his shoes to clean.

Tom and his father arrived in town from Berkshire the day before, and finding, on enquiry, that the Birmingham coaches which ran from the city did not pass through Rugby, but deposited their passengers at Dunchurch, a village three miles distant on the main road, where said passengers had to wait for the Oxford and Leicester coach in the evening, or to take a post-chaise—had resolved that Tom should travel down by the Tally-ho, which diverged from the main road and passed through Rugby itself. And as the Tally-ho was an early coach, they had driven out to the Peacock to be on the road.

Tom had never been in London, and would have liked to have stopped at the Belle Savage, where they had been put down by the Star, just at dusk, that he might have gone roving about those endless, mysterious gas-lit streets, which, with their glare and hum and moving crowds, excited him so that he couldn't talk even. But as soon as he found that the Peacock arrangement would get him to Rugby by twelve o'clock in the day, whereas otherwise he wouldn't be there till the evening, all other plans melted away; his one absorbing aim being to become a public-school boy as fast as possible, and six hours sooner or later seeming to him of the most alarming importance.

Tom and his father had alighted at the Peacock, at about seven in the evening; and having heard with unfeigned joy the paternal order at the bar, of steaks and oyster-sauce for supper in half an hour, and seen his father seated cosily by the bright fire in the coffee-room with the paper in his hand—Tom had run out to see about him, had wondered at all the vehicles passing and repassing, and had fraternized with the boots and hostler, from whom he ascertained that the Tally-ho was a tip-top goer, ten miles an hour including stoppages, and so punctual that all the road set their clocks by her.

Then being summoned to supper, he had regaled himself in one of the bright little boxes of the Peacock coffee-room, on the beefsteak and unlimited oyster-sauce, and brown stout (tasted then for the first time—a day to be marked forever by Tom with a white stone); had at first attended to the excellent advice which his father was bestowing on him from over his glass of steaming brandy and water, and then begun nodding, from the united effects of the stout, the fire, and the lecture. Till the Squire observing Tom's state, and remembering that it was near nine o'clock, and that the Tally-ho left at three, sent the little fellow off to the chamber-maid, with a shake of the hand (Tom having stipulated in the morning before starting that kissing should now cease between them) and a few parting words.

"And now, Tom, my boy," said the Squire, "remember you are going, at your own earnest request, to be chucked into this great school, like a young bear, with all your troubles before you—earlier than we should have sent you perhaps. If schools are what they were in my time, you'll see a great many cruel blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk. But never fear. You tell the truth, keep a brave heart, and never listen to or say any thing you wouldn't have your mother and sister hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home, or we to see you."

The allusion to his mother made Tom feel rather chokey, and he would have liked to have hugged his father well, if it hadn't been for the recent stipulation.

As it was, he only squeezed his father's hand, and looked bravely up and said, "I'll try, father."

"I know you will, my boy. Is your money all safe?"

"Yes," said Tom, diving into one pocket to make sure.

"And your keys?" said the Squire.

"All right," said Tom, diving into another pocket.

"Well then, good-night. God bless you! I'll tell Boots to call you, and be up to see you off."

Tom was carried off by the chambermaid in a brown study, from which he was roused in a clean little attic, by that buxom person calling him a little darling, and kissing him as she left the room; which indignity he was too much surprised to resent. And still thinking of his father's last words, and the look with which they were spoken, he knelt down and prayed that, come what might, he might never bring shame or sorrow on the dear folk at home.

Indeed, the Squire's last words deserved to have their effect, for they had been the result of much anxious thought. All the way up to London he had pondered what he should say to Tom by way of parting advice; something that the boy could keep in his head ready for use. By way of assisting meditation, he had even gone the length of taking out his flint and steel, and tinder, and hammering away for a quarter of an hour till he had manufactured a light for a long Trichinopoly cheroot, which he silently puffed; to the no small wonder of Coachman, who was an old friend, and an institution on the Bath road; and who always expected a talk on the prospects and doings, agricultural and social, of the whole county when he carried the Squire.

To condense the Squire's meditation, it was

somewhat as follows: "I won't tell him to read his Bible, and love and serve God; if he don't do that for his mother's sake and teaching, he won't for mine. Shall I go into the sort of temptations he'll meet with? No, I can't do that. Never do for an old fellow to go into such things with a boy. He won't understand me. Do him more harm than good, ten to one. Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn't sent to school for that—at any rate not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma; no more does his mother. What is he sent to school for? Well, partly because he wanted to go. If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want," thought the Squire; and upon this view of the case he framed his last words of advice to Tom, which were well enough suited to his purpose.

For they were Tom's first thoughts as he tumbled out of bed at the summons of Boots, and proceeded rapidly to wash and dress himself. At ten minutes to three he was down in the coffee-room in his stockings, carrying his hat-box, coat, and comforter in his hand; and there he found his father nursing a bright fire, and a cup of hot coffee and a hard biscuit on the table.

"Now then, Tom, give us your things here, and drink this; there's nothing like starting warm, old fellow."

Tom addressed himself to the coffee, and prattled away while he worked himself into his shoes, and his great coat, well warmed through; a Petersham coat with velvet collar, made tight after the abominable fashion of those days. And just as he is swallowing his last mouthful, winding his comforter round his throat, and tucking the ends into the breast of his coat, the horn sounds, Boots looks in and says, "Tally ho, sir;" and they hear the ring and the rattle of the four fast trotters and the town-made drag, as it dashes up to the Peacock.

"Any thing for us, Bob?" says the burly guard, dropping down from behind, and slapping himself across the chest.

"Young gen'l'm'n, Rugby; three parcels. Leicester; hamper o' game, Rugby," answers Hostler.

"Tell young gent'le to look alive," says Guard, opening the hind-boot and shooting in the parcels after examining them by the lamps. "Here, shove the portmanteau up a-top—I'll fasten him presently. Now then, sir, jump up behind."

"Good-bye, father—my love at home." A last shake of the hand. Up goes Tom, the guard catching his hat-box and holding on with one hand, while with the other he claps the horn to his mouth. Toot, toot, toot! the hostlers let go their heads, the four bays plunge at the collar, and away goes the Tally-ho into the darkness, forty-five seconds from the time they pulled up; Hostler, Boots, and the Squire stand looking after them under the Peacock lamp.

"Sharp work," says the Squire, and goes in again to his bed, the coach being well out of sight and hearing.

Tom stands up on the coach and looks back at his father's figure as long as he can see it, and then the guard having disposed of his luggage comes to an anchor, and finishes his buttonings and other preparations for facing the three hours before dawn; no joke for those who minded cold, on a fast coach in November, in the reign of his late majesty.

I sometimes think that you boys of this generation are a deal tenderer fellows than we used to be. At any rate you are much more comfortable travellers, for I see every one of you with his rug or plaid, and other dodges for preserving the caloric, and most of you going in those fuzzy, dusty, padded first-class carriages. It was another affair altogether, a dark ride on the top of the Tally-ho, I can tell you, in a tight Petersham coat, and your feet dangling six inches from the floor. Then you knew what cold was, and what it was to be without legs, for not a bit of feeling had you in them after the first half-hour. But it had its pleasure—the old dark ride. First there was the consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman—standing out against something, and not giving in. Then there was the music of the rattling harness, and the ring of the horses' feet on the hard road, and the glare of the two bright lamps through the steaming hoarfrost, over the leaders' ears, into the darkness; and the cheery toot of the guard's horn, to warn some drowsy pike-man or hostler at the next change; and the looking forward to daylight—and last, but not least, the delight of returning sensation in your toes.

Then the break of dawn and sunrise, where can they be ever seen in perfection but from a coach roof? You want motion and change and music to see them in their glory; not the music of singing-men and singing-women, but good silent music, which sets itself in your own head, the accompaniment of work and getting over the ground.

The Tally-ho is past St. Alban's, and Tom is enjoying the ride though half frozen. The guard, who is alone with him on the back of the coach, is silent, but has muffled Tom's feet up in straw, and put the end of an oat sack over his knees. The darkness has driven him inward, and he has gone over his little past life, and thought of all his doings and promises, and of his mother and sister, and his father's last words; and has made fifty good resolutions, and means to bear himself



Like a brave Brown as he is, though a young one. Then he has been forward into the mysterious boy-future, speculating as to what sort of a place Rugby is, and what they do there, and calling up all the stories of public schools which he has heard from big boys in the holidays. He is chock full of hope and life, notwithstanding the cold, and kicks his heels against the backboard, and would like to sing, only he doesn't know how his friend the silent guard might take it.

And now the dawn breaks at the end of the fourth stage, and the coach pulls up at a little road-side inn with huge stables behind. There is a bright fire gleaming through the red curtains of the bar-window, and the door is open. The coachman catches his whip into a double thong, and throws it to the hostler; the steam of the horses rises straight up into the air. He has put them along over the last two miles, and is two minutes before his time; he rolls down from his box and into the inn. The guard rolls off from behind. "Now sir," says he to Tom, "you just jump down, and I'll give you a drop of something to keep the cold out."

Tom finds a difficulty in jumping, or indeed in finding the top of the wheel with his feet, which may be in the next world for all he feels; so the guard picks him off the coach-top, and sets him on his legs, and they stomp off into the bar, and join the coachman and the other outside passengers.

Here a fresh-looking barmaid serves them each with a glass of early puri as they stand before the fire, coachman and guard exchanging business remarks. The puri warms the cockles of Tom's heart, and makes him cough.

"Rare tackle, that, sir, of a cold morning," says the coachman, smiling; "Time's up." They are out again and up; coaches the last, gathering the reins into his hands and talking to Jem the hostler about the mare's shoulder, and then swinging himself up on to the box—the horses dashing off in a canter before he falls into his seat. Toot-toot-toot-toot goes the horn, and away they are again, five-and-thirty miles on their road (nearly half way to Rugby, thinks Tom), and the prospect of breakfast at the end of the stage.

And now they begin to see, and the early life of the country side comes out: a market cart or two, men in smock-frocks going to their work pipe in mouth a whiff of which is no bad smell this bright morning. The sun gets up, and the mist shines like silver gauze. They pass the hounds jogging along to a distant meet, at the heels of the huntsman's back, whose face is about the color of the tails of his old pink, as he exchanges greetings with coachman and guard. Now they pull up at a lodge, and take on board a well-muffled-up sportsman, with his gun-case and carpet-bag. An early-up coach meets them, and the coachmen gather up their horses and pass one another with the accustomed lift of the elbow, each team-man doing eleven miles an hour, with a mile to spare behind if necessary. And here comes breakfast.

"Twenty minutes here, gentlemen," says the coachman, as they pull up at half-past seven at the inn-door.

Have we not endured nobly this morning, and is not this a worthy reward for much endurance? There is the low, dark, wainscoted room hung with sporting prints; the hat-stand (with a whip or two standing up in it belonging to bagmen who are still snug in bed) by the door; the blazing fire, with the quaint old glass over the mantel-piece, in which is stuck a large card with the lists of the meets for the week of the county hounds. The table covered with the whitest of cloths and of china, and bearing a pigeon-pie, ham, round of cold boiled beef out from a mammoth ox, and the great loaf of household bread on a wooden trencher. And here comes in the stout head waiter, pulling under a tray of hot viands; kidneys and a steak, transparent rashers and poached eggs, buttered toast and muffins, coffee and tea, all smoking hot. The table can never hold it all; the cold meats are removed to the sideboard, they were only put on for show and to give us an appetite. And now fall on, gentlemen all. It is a well-known sporting-house, and the breakfasts are famous. Two or three men in pink, on their way to the meet, drop in, and are very jovial and sharp-set, as indeed we all are.

"Tea or coffee, sir?" says head waiter, coming round to Tom.

"Coffee, please," says Tom, with his mouth full of muffin and kidney; coffee is a treat to him, tea is not.

Our coachman, I perceive, who breakfasts with us, is a cold-beef man. He also eschews hot potatoes, and addicts himself to a tankard of ale, which is brought him by the barmaid. Sportsman looks on approvingly and orders a ditto for himself.

Tom has eaten kidney and pigeon pie, and imbibed coffee, till his little skin is as tight as a drum; and then has the further pleasure of paying head waiter out of his own purse, in a dignified manner, and walks out before the inn door, to see the horses put to. This is done leisurely and in a highly finished manner by the hostlers, as if they enjoyed the not being hurried. Coachman comes out with his way-bill and puffing a fat cigar which the sportsman has given him. Guard emerges from the tap, where he prefers breakfasting, licking round a tough-looking, doubtful cheroot, which you might tie round your finger, and three waffles of which would knock any one else out of time.

The pinks stand about the inn-door, lighting

cigars and waiting to see us start, while their hacks are led up and down the market-place on which the inn looks. They all know our sportsman, and we feel a reflected credit when we see him chatting and laughing with them.

"Now, sir, please," says the coachman. All the rest of the passengers are up; the guard is locking up the hind boot.

"A good run to you!" says the sportsman to the pinks, and is by the coachman's side in no time.

"Let 'em go, Dick!" The hostlers fly back, drawing off the cloths from their glossy loins, and away we go through the market-place and down through the High Street, looking in at the first floor windows, and seeing several worthy burgesses shaving thereat; while all the shop-boys who are cleaning the windows, and house-maids who are doing the steps, stop and look pleased as we rattle past, as if we were a part of their legitimate morning's amusement. We clear the town and are well out between the hedgerows again as the town clock strikes eight.

The sun shines almost warmly, and breakfast has oiled all springs and loosened all tongues. Tom is encouraged by a remark or two of the guard's, between the puffs of his only cheroot, and besides is getting tired of not talking. He is too full of his destination to talk about anything else; and so asks the guard if he knows Rugby.

"Goes through it every day of my life. Twenty minutes afore twelve down—ten o'clock up."

"What sort of place is it, please?" says Tom.

Guard looks at him with a comical expression.

"Werry out-o'-the way place, sir; no paving to streets, nor no lighting. 'Mazin' big horse and cattle fair in autumn—lasts a week—just over now. Takes town a week to get clean after it. Fairish hunting country. But slow place, sir, slow place; off the main road, you see—only three coaches a day, and one on 'em a two-oss wan, more like a hearse nor a coach—Regulator—comes from Oxford. Young gent'm'n at school calls her Pig and Whistle, and goes up to college by her (six miles an hour) when they goes to enter. Belong to school, sir!"

"Yes," says Tom, not unwilling for a moment that the guard should think him an old boy; but then, having some qualms as to the truth of the assertion, and seeing that if he were to assume the character of an old boy he couldn't go on asking the questions he wanted, added—"that is to say, I'm on my way there. I'm a new boy."

The guard looked as if he knew this quite as well as Tom.

"You're werry late, sir," says the guard; "only six weeks to day to the end of the half." Tom assented. We takes up fine loads this day six weeks, and Monday and Tuesday arter. Hopes we shall have the pleasure of carrying you back."

Tom said he hoped they would; but he thought within himself that his fate would probably be the Pig and Whistle.

"It pays uncommon cert'nly," continues the guard. "Werry free with their cash is the young gent'm'n. But, Lor' bless you, we gets into such rows all 'long the road, what wi' their pea-shooters, and long whips, and hollering, and upsetting every one as comes by; I'd a sight sooner carry one or two on 'em, sir, as I may be a carryin' of you now, than a coach-load."

"What do they do with the pea-shooters?" inquires Tom.

"Do wi' 'em I why, peppers every one's faces as we comes near, 'cept the young gals, and breaks windows wi' them too, some on 'em shoots so hard. Now 'twas just here last June, as we was a driving up the first-day boys, they was mendin' a quarter-mile of road, and there was a lot of Irish chaps, reg'lar roughs, a breaking stones. As we comes up. 'Now, boys,' says young gent on the box (smart young fellow, and desper't reckless), 'here's fun! let the Pats have it about the ears.' 'God's sake, sir, says Bob (that's my mate the coachman), 'don't go for to shoot at 'em, they'll knock us off the coach.' 'Dammie, Choacnee,' says young my lord, 'you ain't afraid; hoora, boys! let 'em have it.' 'Hoora!' sings out the others, and fill their mouths chuck full of peas to last the whole line. Bob, seeing as 'twas to come, knocks his hat over his eyes, hollers to his 'osses, and shakes 'em up, and the way we goes up to the line on 'em, twenty miles an hour. The Pats begin to hoora too, thinking it was a runaway, and first lot on 'em stands grinnin' and wavin' their old hats as we comes abreast on 'em; and then you'd ha' laughed to see how took aback and choking savage they looked when they gets the peas a stingin' all over 'em. But bless you, the laugh weren't all of our side, sir, by a long way. We was going so fast, and they was so took aback, that they didn't take what was up till we was half-way up the line. Then 'twas 'Look out all, surely. They howls all down the line fit to frighten you, some on 'em runs arter us and tries to clamber up behind, only we hits 'em over the fingers and pulls their hands off; one as had had it very sharp act'ly runs right at the leaders, as though he'd ketch 'em by the heads, only luck'ly for him he misses his tip and comes over a heap o' stones first. The rest picks up stones, and gives it us right away till we gets out of shot, the young gents holding out werry manful with the pea-shooters and such stones as lodged on us, and a pretty many there was too. Then Bob picks himself up again, and looks at young gent on box werry solemn. Bob'd had a rum un in the ribs,

which'd like to ha' knocked him off the box, or made him drop the reins. Young gent on box picks hisself up, and so does we all, and looks round to count damage. Bob's head cut open and his hat gone; nother young gent's hat gone; mine knocked in at the side, and not one on us as wasn't black and blue somewheres or another, most on 'em all over. Two pound ten to pay for damages to paint, which they subscribed for there and then, and give Bob and me a extra half-sovereign each; but I wouldn't go down that line again not for twenty half-sovereigns." And the guard shook his head slowly, and got up and blew a clear brisk toot-toot.

"What fun!" said Tom, who could scarcely contain his pride at this exploit of his future school-fellows. He longed already for the end of the half that he might join them.

"Tain't such good fun though, sir, for the folk as meets the coach, nor for we who has to go back with it next day. Toem Irishers last summer had all got stones ready for us, and was all but lettin' drive, and we'd got two reverend gents aboard too. We pulled up at the beginning of the line, and pacified them, and we're never going to carry no more pea-shooters, unless they promises not to fire where there's a line of Irish chaps a stone-breaking." The guard stopped and pulled away at his cheroot, regarding Tom benignantly the while.

"Oh, don't stop! tell us something more about the pea-shooting."

"Well, there'd like to have been a pretty piece of work over it at Bicester, a while back. We was six mile from the town, when we meets an old square-headed, gray-haired yeoman chap, a jogging along quite quiet. He looks up at the coach, and just then a pea hits him on the nose, and some catches his cob behind and makes him dance up on his hind legs. I see'd the old boy's face flush and look plaguy awkward, and I thought we was in for somethin' nasty."

"He turns his cob's head, and rides quietly after us just out of shot. How that ere cob did step! we never shook him off not a dozen yards in the six miles. At first the young gents was werry lively on him; but afore we got in, seeing how steady the old chap come on, they was quite quiet, and laid their heads together what they should do. Some was for fighting, some for axing his pardon. He rides into the town close after us, comes up when we stops, and says the two as shot at him must come before a magistrate; and a great crowd comes round, and we couldn't get the osses to. But the young uns they all stand by one another, and says all or none must go, and as how they'd fight it out, and have to be carried. Just as 'twas gettin' serious, and the old boy and the mob was going to pull 'em off the coach, one little fellow jumps up and says, 'Here—I'll stay—I'm only going three miles farther. My father's name's Davis, he's known about here, and I'll go before the magistrate with this gentleman.' 'What! be thee parson Davis's son?' says the old boy. 'Yes,' says the young un. 'Well, I be mortal sorry to meet thee in such company, but for thy father's sake and thine (for thee bist a brave young chap) I'll say no more about it.' Didn't the boys cheer him, and the mob cheered the young chap—and then one of the biggest gets down and begs his pardon werry gentlemanly for all the rest, saying as they all had been plaguy vexed from the first, but didn't like to ax his pardon till then, 'cause they felt they hadn't ought to shirk the consequences of their joke. And then they all got down, and shook hands with the old boy, and asked him to all parts of the country, to their homes, and we drives off twenty minutes behind time, with cheering and hollering as if we was county members. But, Lor' bless you, sir," says the guard, smacking his hand down on his knee and looking full into Tom's face, "ten minutes arter they was all as bad as ever."

Tom showed such undisguised and open-mouthed interest in his narrations, that the old guard rubbed up his memory, and launched out into a graphic history of all the performances of the boys on the roads for the last twenty years. Off the road he could not go; the exploit must have been connected with horses or vehicles to hang in the old fellow's head. Tom tried him off his own ground once or twice, but found he knew nothing beyond, and so let him have his head, and the rest of the road bowed easily away; for old Blow-hard, (as the boys called him) was a dry old rle, with much kindness and humor, and a capital spinner of a yarn when he had broken the neck of his day's work, and got plenty of ale under his belt.

What struck Tom's youthful imagination most, was the desperate and lawless character of most of the stories. Was the guard hoaxing him? He couldn't help hoping that they were true. It's very odd how almost all English boys love danger; you can get ten to join a game, or climb a tree, or swim a stream, when there's a chance of breaking their limbs or getting drowned, for one who'll stay on level ground, or in his depth, or play quoits or bowls.

The guard had just finished an account of a desperate fight which had happened at one of the fairs between the drovers and the farmers with their whips, and the boys with cricket-bats and wickets, which arose out of a playful but objectionable practice of the boys going round to the public-houses and taking the line-pins out of the wheels of the gigs, and was moralizing upon the way in which the Doctor, "a terrible stern man



he'd heard tell," had come down upon several of the performers, "sending three on 'em off next morning, each in a po-chay with a parish constable," when they turned a corner and neared the milestone, the third from Rugby. By the stone two boys stood, their jackets buttoned tight, waiting for the coach.

"Look here, sir," says the guard, after giving a sharp toot-toot, "there's two on 'em, out and out runners they be. They comes out about twice or three times a week, and spirts a mile alongside of us."

And as they came up, sure enough, away went two boys along the footpath, keeping up with the horses; the first a light, clean-made fellow going on springs, the other stout and round-shouldered, laboring in his pace, but going as dogged as a bull-terrier.

Old Blow-hard looked on admiringly. "See how beautiful that there an holds himself together, and goes from his hips, sir," said he; "he's a 'mazin' fine runner. Now many coachmen as drives a first-rate team'd put it on, and try and pass 'em. But Bob, sir, bless you, he's tender-hearted; he'd sooner pull in a bit if he see'd 'em gettin' beat. I lo b'deve too as that there un'd sooner break his heart than let us go by him afore next milestone."

At the second milestone the boys pulled up short, and waved their hats to the guard, who had his watch out and shouted "4.53," thereby indicating that the mile had been done in four seconds under the five minutes. They passed several more parties of boys, all of them objects of the deepest interest to Tom, and came in sight of the town at ten minutes before twelve. Tom fetched a long breath, and thought he had never spent a pleasanter day. Before he went to bed he had quite settled that it must be the greatest day he should ever spend, and didn't alter his opinion for many a long year—if he has yet.

## CHAPTER V.

### RUGBY AND FOOTBALL.

"And so here's Rugby, sir, at last, and you'll be in plenty of time for dinner at the School-house, as I tell'd you," said the old guard, pulling his horn out of its case, and tootle-tooting away; while the coachman snook up his horses, and carried them along the side of the school close, round Deadman's corner, past the school gates, and down the High Street to the Spread Eagle; the wheelers in a spanking trot, and leaders cantering, in a style which would not have disgraced "Cherry Boo," "ramping, stamping, tearing, swearing Bully Harwood," or any other of the old coaching heroes.

Tom's heart beat quick as he passed the great school field or close, with its noble elms, in which several games at football were going on, and tried to take in at once the long line of gray buildings, beginning with the chapel, and ending with the School-house, the residence of the head-master, where the great flag was lazily waving from the highest round tower. And he began already to be proud of being a Rugby boy, as he passed the school gates with the oriel-window above, and saw the boys standing there, looking as if the town belonged to them, and nodding in a familiar manner to the coachman, as if any one of them would be quite equal to getting on the box, and working the team down street as well as he.

One of the young heroes, however, ran out from the rest, and scrambled up behind; where, having righted himself, and nodded to the guard, with "How do, Jem!" and turned short round to Tom, and, after looking him over for a minute, began—

"I say, young fellow, is your name Brown?"

"Yes," said Tom, in considerable astonishment; glad, however, to have lighted upon some one already who seemed to know him.

"Ah, I thought so: you know my old aunt, Miss East, she lives somewhere down your way in Berkshire. She wrote to me that you were coming to-day, and asked me to give you a lift."

Tom was somewhat inclined to resent the patronizing air of his new friend, a boy of just about his own height and age, but gifted with the most transcendent coolness and assurance, which Tom felt to be aggravating and hard to bear, but couldn't for the life of him help admiring and envying—especially when young my lord begins hectoring two or three long leading fellows, half porter half stableman, with a strong touch of the blackguard; and in the end arranges with one of them, nicknamed Cooley, to carry Tom's luggage up to the School-house for sixpence.

"And hark'ee, Cooley, it must be up in ten minutes or no more joss from me. Come along, Brown." And away swaggers the young potentate, with his hands in his pocket, and Tom at his side.

"All right, sir," says Cooley, touching his hat, with a leer and a wink at his companions.

"Hello tho'," says East, pulling up, and taking another look at Tom, "this'll never do—haven't you got a hat?—we never wear caps here. Only he louts wear caps. Bless you, if you were to go into the quadrangle with that thing on, I—don't know what'd happen." The very idea was quite beyond young Master East, and he looked unutterable things.

Tom thought his cap a very knowing affair, but confessed that he had a hat in his hat-box; which was accordingly at once extracted from the hind boot, and Tom equipped in his go-to-meeting roof, as his new friend called it. But this didn't quite suit his fastidious taste in another minute, being too shiny; so, as they walk up the town, they

dive into Nixon's the hatter's, and Tom is arrayed, to his utter astonishment and without paying for it, in a regulation cat-skin at seven-and-sixpence; Nixon undertaking to send the best hat up to the matron's room, School-house, in half an hour.

"You can send in a note for a tile on Monday, and make it all right, you know," said Mentor; "we're allowed two seven-and-sixers a half besides what we bring from home."

Tom by this time began to be conscious of his new social position and dignities, and to luxuriate in the realized ambition of being a public-school boy at last, with a vested right of spoiling two seven-and-sixers in half a year.

"You see," said his friend, as they strolled up towards the school-gates, in explanation of his conduct, "a great deal depends on how a fellow cuts up at first. If he's got nothing odd about him, and answers straightforward, and holds his head up, he gets on. Now you'll do very well as to rig, all but that cap. You see I'm doing the handsome thing by you, because my father knows yours; besides, I want to please the old lady. She gave me half-a-sov this half, and perhaps'll double it next, if I keep in her good books."

There's nothing for candor like a lower-school boy, and East was a genuine specimen—frank, hearty, and good-natured, well satisfied with himself and his position, and chock full of life and spirits, and all the Rugby prejudices and traditions which he had been able to get together in the long course of one half year during which he had been at the School-house.

And Tom, notwithstanding his bumptiousness, felt friends with him at once, and began sucking in all his ways and prejudices, as fast as he could understand them.

East was great in the character of elcerone; he carried Tom through the great gates, where were only two or three boys. These satisfied themselves with the stock questions—"You fellow, what's your name? Where do you come from? How old are you? Where do you board? and, What form are you in?"—and so they passed on through the quadrangle and small courtyard, upon which looked down a lot of little windows (belonging, as his guide informed him, to some of the School-house studies), into the matron's room, where East introduced Tom to that dignity; made him give up the key of his trunk, that the matron might unpack his linen, and told the story of the hat and of his own presence of mind: upon the relation whereof the matron laughingly scolded him, for the coolest new boy in the house; and East, indignant at the accusation of newness, marched Tom off into the quadrangle, and began showing him the schools, and examining him as to his literary attainments; the result of which was a prophecy that they would be in the same form, and could do their lessons together.

"And now come in and see my study; we shall have just time before dinner; and afterwards, before calling over, we'll do the close."

Tom followed his guide through the School-house hall, which opens into the quadrangle. It is a great room thirty feet long and eighteen high, or thereabouts, with two great tables running the whole length, and two large fire-places at the side, with blazing fires in them, at one of which some dozen boys were standing and lounging, some of whom shouted to East to stop; but he shot through with his convoy, and landed him in the long dark passage, with a large fire at the end of each, upon which the studies opened. Into one of these, in the bottom passage, East bolted with our hero, slamming and bolting the door behind them, in case of pursuit from the hall, and Tom was for the first time in a Rugby boy's citadel.

He hadn't been prepared for separate studies, and was not a little astonished and delighted with the place in question.

It wasn't very large, certainly, being about six feet long by four broad. It couldn't be called light, as there were bars and a grating to the window; which little precautions were necessary in the studies on the ground floor looking out into the close, to prevent the exit of small boys after locking up, and the entrance of contraband articles. But it was uncommonly comfortable to look at, Tom thought. The space under the window at the farther end was occupied by a square table covered with a reasonably clean and whole red and blue check table-cloth; a hard-seated sofa covered with red stuff occupied one side, running up to the end, and making a seat for one, or, by sitting close, for two, at the table; and a good stout wooden chair afforded a seat to another boy, so that three could sit and work together. The walls were wainscoted half-way up, the wainscot being covered with green baize, the remainder with a bright-patterned paper, on which hung three or four prints, of dogs' heads, Grimaldi winning the Aylesbury steeple-chase, Amy Robsart, the reigning Waverley beauty of the day, and Tom Crib in a posture of defence, which did no credit to the science of that hero, if truly represented. Over the door was a row of hat-pegs, and on each side bookcases with cupboards at the bottom; shelves and cupboards being filled indiscriminately with schoolbooks, a cup or two, a mousetrap, and candlesticks, leather straps, a fustian bag, and some curious-looking articles, which puzzled Tom not a little, until his friend explained that they were climbing irons, and showed their use. A cricket-bat and small fishing-rod stood up in one corner.

This was the residence of East and another boy in the same form, and had more interest for Tom

than Windsor Castle, or any other residence in the British Isles. For was he not to become the joint owner of a similar home, the first place he could call his own? One's own—what a charm there is in the words! How long it takes boy and man to find out their worth! how fast most of us hold on to them! faster and more jealously, the nearer we are to that general home into which we can take nothing, but must go naked, as we came into the world. When shall we learn that he who multiplieth possession multiplieth troubles, and that the one single use of things which we call our own is that they may be his who hath need of them.

"And shall I have a study like this, too?" said Tom.

"Yes, of course, you'll be chummed with some fellow on Monday, and you can sit here till then."

"What nice places!"

"They're well enough," answered East patronizingly, "only uncommon cold of nights sometimes. Gower—that's my chum—and I make a fire with paper on the floor after supper generally, only that makes it so smoky."

"But there's a big fire out in the passage," said Tom.

"Precious little we get out of that tho'," said East; "Jones the preceptor has the study at the fire end, and he has rigged up an iron rod and green baize curtain across the passage, which he draws at night, and sits there with his door open, so he gets all the fire, and hears if we come out of our studies at eight, or make a noise. However he's taken to sitting fifth-form room lately, so we do get a bit of fire now sometimes; only to keep a sharp look-out that he don't catch you behind his curtain when he comes down—that's all."

A quarter past one now struck, and the bell began tolling for dinner, so they went into the hall and took their places, Tom at the very bottom of the second table, next to the preceptor (who sat at the end to keep order there), and East a few paces higher. And now Tom for the first time saw his future schoolfellows in a body. In they came, some hot and ruddy from football or long walks, some pale and chilly from hard reading in their studies, some from loitering over the fire at the pastrycooks, dainty mortals, bringing with them pickles and sauce-bottles to help them with their dinners. And a great big-bearded man, whom Tom took for a master, began calling over the names, while the great joints were being rapidly carved on the third table in the corner by the old verger and the housekeeper. Tom's turn came last, and meanwhile he was all eyes, looking first with awe at the great man who sat close to him, and was helped first, and who read a hard-looking book all the time he was eating; and when he got up and walked off to the fire, at the small boys round him, some of whom were reading, and the rest talking in whispers to one another, or stealing one another's bread, or shooting pellets, or digging their forks through the tablecloth. However, notwithstanding his curiosity, he managed to make a capital dinner by the time the big man called "Stand up!" and said grace.

As soon as dinner was over, and Tom had been questioned by such of his neighbors as were curious as to his birth, parentage, education, and other like matters, East, who evidently enjoyed his new dignity of patron and Mentor, proposed having a look at the close, which Tom, thirst for knowledge, gladly assented to, and they went out through the quadrangle and past the big five's court, into the great playground.

"That's the chapel, you see," said East, "and there just behind it is the place for fights; you see it's most out of the way of the masters, who all live on the other side and don't come by here after the first lesson or calling-over. That's when the fights come off. And all the part where we are is the little side ground, right up to the trees, and on the other side of the trees is the big side ground, where the great matches are played. And there's the island in the farthest corner; you'll know that well enough next half, when there's island fagging. I say, it's horrid cold, let's have a run across;" and away went East, Tom close behind him. East was evidently putting his best foot foremost, and Tom, who was mighty proud of his running, and not a little anxious to show his friend that although a new boy he was no milkop, laid himself down to work in his very best style. Right across the close they went, each doing all he knew, and there wasn't a yard between them when they pulled up at the island-moat.

"I say," said East, as soon as he got his wind, looking with much increased respect at Tom, "you ain't a bad send, not by no means. Well, I'm as warm as toast now."

"But why do you wear white trousers in November?" said Tom. He had been struck by this peculiarity in the costume of almost all the School-house boys.

"Why, bless us, don't you know? No, I forgot. Why, to-day's the School-house match. Our house plays the whole of the School at football. And we all wear white trousers, to show 'em we don't care for hacks. You're in luck to come to-day. You just will see a match; and Brook's going to let me play in quarters. That's more than he'll do for any other lower school-boy, except James, and he's fourteen."

"Who's Brooks?"

"Why, that big fellow who called over at dinner, to be sure. He's cock of the school, and head of



the School-house side, and the best kick and charger in Rugby."

"Ob, but do show me where they play. And tell me about it. I love football so, and have played all my life. Won't Brooke let me play?"

"Not he," said East, with some indignation; "why, you don't know the rules—you'll be a month learning them. And then it's no joke playing-up in a match, I can tell you. Quite another thing from your private school games. Why, there's been two collar-bones broken this half, and a dozen fellows lamed. And last year a fellow had his leg broken."

Tom listened with the profoundest respect to this chapter of accidents, and followed East across the level ground, till they came to a sort of gigantic gallows of two poles eighteen feet high, fixed upright in the ground some fourteen feet apart, with a cross-bar running from one to the other at the height of ten feet or thereabouts.

"This is one of our goals," said East, "and you see the other across there, right opposite, under the Doctor's wall. Well, the match is for the best of three goals; whichever side kicks two goals wins; and it won't do, you see, just to kick the ball through these posts, it must go over the cross-bar; any height'll do, so long as it's between the posts. You'll have to stay in goal to touch the ball when it rolls behind the posts, because if the other side touch it they have a try; it goal. Then we fellows in quarters, we play just about in front of goal here, and have to turn the ball and kick it back before the big fellows on the other side can follow it up. And in front of us all the big fellows play, and that's where the scrummages are mostly."

Tom's respect increased as he struggled to make out his friend's technicalities, and the other set to work to explain the mysteries of "off your side," "drop-kicks," "punts," "places," and the other intricacies of the great science of foot-ball.

"But how do you keep the ball between the goals?" said he; "I can't see why it mightn't go right down to the chapel."

"Why, that's out of play," answered East. "You see this gravel-walk running down all along this side of the playing-ground, and the line of elms opposite on the other? Well, they're the bounds. As soon as the ball gets past them, it's in touch, and out of play. And then whoever first touches it, has to knock it straight out amongst the players-up, who make two lines with a space between them, every fellow going on his own side. Ain't there just fine scrummages then! and the three trees you see there which come out into the play, that's a tremendous place when the ball hangs there, for you get thrown against the trees, and that's worse than any back."

Tom wondered within himself, as they strolled back again towards the five's court, whether the matches were really such break-neck affairs as East represented, and whether, if they were, he should ever get to like them and play-up well.

He hadn't long to wonder, however, for next minute East cried out, "Hurrah! here's the punt-about—come along and try your hand at a kick." The punt-about is the practice-ball, which is just brought out and kicked about anyhow from one boy to another before callings-over and dinner, and at other odd times. They joined the boys who brought it out, all small School-house fellows, friends of East; and Tom had the pleasure of trying his skill, and performed very creditably, after first driving his foot three inches into the ground, and then nearly kicking his leg into the air, in vigorous efforts to accomplish a drop-kick after the manner of East.

Presently more boys and bigger came out, and boys from other houses on their way to calling-over, and more balls were sent for. The crowd thickened as three o'clock approached; and when the hour struck, one hundred and fifty boys were hard at work. Then the balls were held, the master of the week came down in cap and gown to calling-over, and the whole school of three hundred boys swept into the big school to answer to their names.

"I may come in, mayn't I?" said Tom, catching East by the arm and longing to feel one of them.

"Yes, come along, nobody'll say any thing. You won't be so eager to get into calling-over after a month," replied his friend; and they marched into the big school together, and up to the farther end, where that illustrious form, the lower fourth, which had the honor of East's punishment for the time-being, stood.

The master mounted into the high desk by the door, and one of the prepostors of the week stood by him on the steps, the other three marching up and down the middle of the school with their canes, calling out "Silence, silence!" The sixth form stood close by the door on the left, some thirty in number, mostly great big grown men, as Tom thought, surveying them from a distance with awe. The fifth form behind them, twice their number, and not quite so big. These on the left; and on the right the lower fifth, shell, and all the junior forms in order; while up the middle marched the three prepostors.

Then the prepostor who stands by the master calls out the names, beginning with the sixth form; and as he calls, each boy answers "here" to his name, and walks out. Some of the sixth form at the door to turn the whole string of boys into the close; it is a great match day, and every boy in the school, whether he will or no, must be there. The rest of the sixth go forward into the close,

to see that no one escapes by any of the side gates.

To-day, however, being the School-house match, none of the School-house prepostors stay by the door to watch for truants of their side—there is *carte blanche* to the School-house fags to go where they like: "They trust to our honor," as East proudly informs Tom; "they know very well that no School-house boy would cut the match. If he did, we'd very soon cut him, I can tell you."

The master of the week being short-sighted, and the prepostors of the week small, and not well up to their work, the lower-school boys employ the ten minutes which elapse before their names are called, in pelting one another vigorously with acorns, which fly about in all directions. The small prepostors dash in every now and then, and generally chastise some quiet, timid boy, who is equally afraid of acorns and canes, while the principal performers get dexterously out of the way; and so calling-over rolls on somehow, much like the big world, punishments lighting on wrong shoulders, and matters going generally in a queer, cross-grained way, but the end coming somehow, which is after all the great point. And now the master of the week has finished, and locked up the big school; and the prepostors of the week come out, sweeping the last remnant of the School fags—who had been loafing about the corners by the five's court, in hopes of a chance of bolting—before them into the close.

"Hold the punt-about!" "To the goals!" are the cries, and all stray balls are impounded by the authorities; and the whole mass of boys moves up towards the two goals, dividing as they go into three bodies. That little band on the left, consisting of from fifteen to twenty boys, Tom amongst them, who are making for the goal under the school-house wall, are the School-house boys who are not to play-up, and have to stay in goal. The larger body moving up to the island goal are the School boys in a like predicament. The great mass in the middle are the players-up, both sides mingled together; they are hanging their jackets, and all who mean real work, their hats, waistcoats, neck-handkerchiefs and braces, on the railings round the small trees; and there they go by twos and threes up to their respective grounds. There is none of the color and tastiness of get-up you will perceive, which lends such a life to the present game at Rugby, making the dull and worst fought match a pretty sight. Now each house has its own uniform of cap and jersey, of some lively color; but at the time we are speaking of, plush caps have not yet come in, or uniforms of any sort, except the School-house white trowsers, which are abominably cold to-day: let us get to work, bare-headed and girded with our plain leather straps—but we mean business, gentlemen.

And now that the two sides have fairly sundered, and each occupies its own ground, and we get a good look at them, what absurdity is this! You don't mean to say that those fifty or sixty boys in white trousers, many of them quite small, are going to play that huge mass opposite? Indeed I do, gentlemen; they are going to try, at any rate, and won't make such a bad fight of it either, mark my word; for hasn't old Brooke won the toss, with his lucky halfpenny, and got choice of goals and kick-off? The new ball you may see lie there quite by itself, in the middle, pointing towards the school or island goal; in another minute it will be well on its way there. Use that minute in remarking how the School-house side is drilled. You will see, in the first place, that the sixth form boy who has the charge of goal has spread his force (the goal-keepers) so as to occupy the whole space behind the goal-posts, at distances of about five yards apart; a safe and well-kept goal is the foundation of all good play. Old Brooke is talking to the captain of quarters; and now he moves away. See how that youngster spreads his men (the light brigade) carefully over the ground, halfway between their own goal and the body of their own players-up (the heavy brigade). These again play in several bodies; there is young Brooke and the bull-dogs—mark them well—they are the "fighting brigade," the "die-hards," lurking about at leap-frog to keep themselves warm, and playing tricks on one another. And on each side of Old Brooke, who is now standing in the middle of the ground and just going to kick-off, you see a separate wing of players-up, each with a boy of acknowledged prowess to look to—here Warner, and there Hedge; but over all is old Brooke, absolute as he of Russia, but wisely and bravely ruling over whiling and worshipping subjects, a true football king. His face is earnest and careful as he glances a last time over his array, but full of pluck and hope, the sort of look I hope to see in my general when I go out to fight.

The School side is not organized in the same way. The goal-keepers are all in lumps, anyhow and no-how; you can't distinguish between the players-up and the boys in quarters, and there is divided leadership; but with such odds in strength and weight it must take more than that to hinder them from winning; so their leaders seem to think, for they let the players-up manage themselves.

But now look, there is a slight move forward of the School-house wings; a shout of "Are you ready?" and loud affirmative reply. Old Brooke takes half a dozen quick steps, and away goes the ball spinning towards the School goal; seventy yards before it touches ground, and at no point above

twelve or fifteen feet high, a model kick-off; and the School-house cheer and rush on; the ball is returned, and they meet it and drive it back amongst the masses of the School already in motion. Then the two sides close, and you can see nothing for minutes but a swaying crowd of boys, at one point violently agitated. That is where the ball is, and there are the keen players to be met, and the glory and the hard knocks to be got; you hear the dull thud of the ball, and the shouts of "Off your side," "Down with him," "Put him over," "Pravo." This is what we call "a scrummage," gentlemen, and the first scrummage in a School-house match was no joke in the consulship of Plancus.

But see! it has broken; the ball is driven out on the School-house side, and a rush of the School carries it past the School-house players-up. "Look out in quarters," Brooke's and twenty other voices ring out. No need to call, though; the School-house captain of quarters has caught it on the bound, dodges the foremost School boys who are heading the rush, and sends it back with a good drop-kick well into the enemy's country. And then follows rush upon rush, and scrummage upon scrummage, the ball now driven through into the School-house quarters, and now into the School goal; for the School-house have not lost the advantage which the kick-off and a slight wind gave them at the outset, and are slightly "penning" their adversaries. You say, you don't see much in it all; nothing but a struggling mass of boys, and a leather ball, which seems to excite them all to great fury, as a red rag does a bull. My dear sir, a battle would look much the same to you, except that the boys would be men, and the balls iron; but a battle would be worth your looking at, for all that, and so is a football match. You can't be expected to appreciate the delicate strokes of play, the turns by which a game is lost and won—it takes an old player to do that, but the broad philosophy of football you can understand if you will come along with me a little nearer, and let us consider it together.

The ball had just fallen again where the two sides are thickest, and they close rapidly around it in a scrummage; it must be driven through now by force or skill, till it flies out on one side or the other. Look how differently the boys face it! Here comes two of the bull-dogs, bursting through the outsiders; in they go, straight to the heart of the scrummage, bent on driving that ball out on the opposite side. That is what they mean to do. My sons, my sons! you are too hot; you have gone past the ball, and must struggle now right through the scrummage, and get round and back again to your own side, before you can be of any further use. Here comes young Brooke; he goes in as straight as you, but keeps his head, and back, and bends, holding himself still behind the ball, and driving it furiously when he gets the chance. Take a leaf out of his book, you young chargers. Here come Speedicut, and Flashman, the School-house bully, with shouts and great action. Won't you two come up to young Brooke, after locking-up, by the School-house fire, with "Old fellow, wasn't that just a splendid scrummage by the three trees?" But he knows you, and so do we. You don't really want to drive that ball through that scrummage, chancing all hurt for the glory of the School-house—but to make us think that's what you want—a vastly different thing; and fellows of your kidney will never go through more than the skirts of a scrummage, where it's all push and no kicking. We respect boys who keep out of it, and don't sham going in; but you—we had rather not say what we think of you.

Then the boys who are bending and watching on the outside, mark them—they are most useful players, the dodgers; who seize on the ball the moment it rolls out from amongst the chargers, and away with it across to the opposite goal; they seldom go into the scrummage, but must have more coolness than the chargers; as endless as are boys' characters, so are their ways of facing or not facing a scrummage at football.

Three-quarters of an hour are gone; first winds are failing, and weight and numbers beginning to tell. Yard by yard the School-house have been driven back, contesting every inch of ground. The bull-dogs are the color or mother earth from shoulder to ankle, except young Brooke, who has a marvellous knack of keeping his legs. The School-house are being penned in their turn, and now the ball is behind their goal, under the Doctor's wall. The Doctor and some of his family are there looking on, and seem as anxious as any boy for the success of the School-house. We get a minute's breathing time before old Brooke kicks out, and he gives the word to play strongly for touch, by the three trees. Away goes the ball, and the bull-dogs after it, and in another minute there is a shout of "In touch," "Our ball." Now's your time, old Brooke, while your men are still fresh. He stands with the ball in his hand, waits the two sides form in deep lines opposite one another; he must strike it straight out between them. The lines are thickest close to him, but young Brooke and two or three of his men are shifting up farther, where the opposite line is weak. Old Brooke strikes it out straight and strong, and it falls opposite his brother. Hurrah! that rush has taken it right through the School line, and away past the three trees, far into their quarters, and



"What's singing," said Tom, taking out his pipe.



out of the basin, where he had been plunging it in cold water.

"Well, you are jolly green," answered his friend from a neighboring basin. "Why, the last six Saturdays of every half, we sing, of course: and this is the first of them. No first lesson to do, you know, and lie in bed to-morrow morning."

"But who sings?"

"Why, every body, of course; you'll see soon enough. We begin directly after supper, and sing till bed-time. It ain't such good fun now tho' as 'tis in the summer half, 'cause then we sing in the little fives' court, under the library you know. We take out tables, and the big boys sit round, and drink beer; double allowance on Saturday nights; and we cut about the quadrangle between the songs, and it looks like a lot of robbers in a cave. And the louts come and pound at the great gates, and we pound back again, and shout at them. But this half we only sing in the hall. Come along down to my study."

Their principal employment in the study was to clear out East's table, removing the drawers and ornaments and tablecloth, for he lived in the bottom passage, and his table was in requisition for the singing.

Supper came in due course at seven o'clock, consisting of bread and cheese and beer, which were all saved for the singing; and directly afterwards the fags went to work to prepare the hall. The School-house hall, as has been said, is a great long high room, with two large fires on one side, and two large iron bound tables, one running down the middle, and the other along the wall opposite the fire-places. Around the upper fire the fags placed the tables in the form of a horse-shoe, and upon them the jugs with the Saturday night's allowance of beer. Then the big boys used to drop in and take their seats, bringing with them bottled beer and song-books; for although they all knew the songs by heart, it was the thing to have an old manuscript book descended from some departed hero, in which they were all carefully written out.

The sixth-form boys had not yet appeared: so to fill up the gap, an interesting and time-honored ceremony was gone through. Each new boy was placed on the table in turn, and made to sing a solo, under the penalty of drinking a large mug of salt and water if he resisted or broke down. However, the new boys all sing like nightingales to-night, and the salt water is not in requisition; Tom, as his part, performing the old west-country song of "The Leather Bottle" with considerable applause. And at the half hour down come the sixth and fifth form boys, and take their places at the tables, which are filled up by the next biggest boys; the rest, for whom there is no room at the table, standing round outside.

The glasses and mugs are filled, and then the fag-man strikes up an old sea song—and all the seventy voices join in, not mindful of harmony, but bent on noise, which they attain decidedly, but the general effect isn't bad. And then follow the "British Grenadiers," "Billy Taylor," "The Siege of Seringapatam," "Three Jolly Post-boys," and other vociferous songs in rapid succession, including the "Chesapeake and Shannon," a song lately introduced in honor of old Brooke: The sixth and fifth know that "brave Brooke" of the Shannon was no sort of relation to our old Brooke. The fourth form are uncertain in their belief, but for the most part hold that old Brooke was a shipman then on board his uncle's ship. And the lower school never doubt for a moment that it was our old Brooke who led the boarders, in what capacity they care not a straw. During the pauses the bottled-beer dorks fly rapidly, and the big boys, at least all of them who have a fellow-feeling for dry throats, hand their mugs over their shoulders to be emptied by the small ones who who stand round behind.

Then Warner, the head of the house, gets up and wants to speak, but he can't, for every boy knows what's coming; and the big boys who sit at the tables pound them and cheer; and the small boys who stand behind pound one another, and cheer, and rush about the hall cheering. Then silence being made, Warner reminds them of the old School-house custom of drinking the healths, on the first night of singing, of those who are going to leave at the end of the half. "He says that they know what he is going to say already—(loud cheers)—and so won't keep them, but only ask them to treat the toast as it deserves. It is the head of the eleven, the head of the side football, their leader on this glorious day—Peter Brooke!"

And away goes the pounding and cheering again, becoming deafening when old Brooke gets on his legs: tall a tale having broken down, and a gallon or so of beer been upset, and all throats getting dry, scalded chins, and the hero speaks, leaning his hands on the table, and bending a little forward. No action, no tricks of oratory; plain, strong, and straight, like his play.

"Gentlemen of the School-house! I am very proud of the way in which you have received my name, and I wish I could say all I should like to in return. But I know I shan't. However, I'll do my best. I can't say what seems to me ought to be said by a fellow who's just going to leave, and who has spent a good share of his life here. Right or wrong, and right and safe years as I can never forget this night. So now I hope you'll take notice of what I say—for I am a school-boy, and you're bound to listen to school-boys. I want to say one thing, and that is, I don't want to see what I am! And I am

going to talk seriously, because I feel so. It's a jolly time, too, getting to the end of the half, and a goal kicked by us first day—(tremendous applause)—after one of the hardest and fiercest day's play I can remember in eight years—(frantic shoutings). The school played splendidly, too, I will say, and kept it up to the last. That last charge of theirs would have carried away a house. I never thought to see anything again of old Crab there, except little pieces, when I saw him tumbled over by it—(laughter and shouting, and great slapping on the back of Jones by the boys nearest him). Well, but we beat 'em—(cheers). Ay, but why did we beat 'em? answer me that—(shouts of 'your play'). Nonsense! 'Twasn't the wind and kick-off either—that wouldn't do it. 'Twasn't because we've half a dozen of the best players in the school, as we have. I wouldn't change Warner, and Hedge, and Crab, and the young un, for any six on their side—(violent cheers.) But half a dozen fellows can't keep it up for two hours against two hundred. Why is it then? I'll tell you what I think. It's because we've more reliance on one another, more of a house feeling, more fellowship than the School can have. Each of us knows and can depend on his next-hand man better—that's why we beat 'em to-day. We've union, they've division—there's the secret—(cheers). But how's this to be kept up? How's it to be improved? That's the question. For I take it, we're all in earnest about beating the School, whatever else we care about. I know I'd sooner win two School-house matches running than get the Balliol scholarship any day—(frantic cheers).

"Now, I'm as proud of the house as any one. I believe it's the best house in the school, out-and-out—(cheers). But it's a long way from what I want to see it. First, there's a deal of bullying going on. I know it well. I don't pry about and interfere; that only makes it more underhand, and encourages the small boys to come to us with their fingers in their eyes telling tales, and so we should be worse off than ever. It's very little kindness for the sixth to meddle generally—you youngsters, mind that. You'll be all the better football players for learning to stand it, and to take your own parts, and fight it through. But depend on it, there's nothing breaks up a house like bullying. Bullies are cowards, and one coward makes many; so good-bye to the school-house match if bullying gets ahead here. (Loud applause from the small boys, who look meaningly at Flashman and other boys at the tables.) Then there's fuddling about in the public-house, and drinking bad spirits, and punch, and such rot-gut stuff. That won't make good drop-kicks or chargers of you, take my word for it. You get plenty of good beer here, and that's enough for you; and drinking isn't fine or manly, whatever some of you may think of it.

"One other thing I must have a word about. A lot of you think and say, for I've heard you, 'There's this new Doctor hasn't been here so long as some of us, and he's changing all the old customs. Rugby, and the school-house especially, are going to the dogs. Stand up for the good old ways, and down with the Doctor!' Now I'm as fond of old Rugby customs and ways as any of you, and I've been here longer than any of you, and I'll give you a word of advice in time, for I shouldn't like to see any of you getting sickel. 'Down with the Doctor' 's easier said than done. You'll find him pretty tight on his perch, I take it, and an awkwardish customer to handle in that line. Besides, now, what customs has he put down? There was the good old custom of taking the linchpins out of the farmers' and bagmen's gigs at the fairs, and a cowardly blackguard custom it was. We all know what came of it, and no wonder the Doctor objected to it. But, come now, any of you, name a custom that he has put down."

"The hounds," calls out a fifth-form boy, clad in a green cutaway with brass buttons and cord trousers, the leader of the sporting interest, and reputed a great rider and keen hand generally.

"Well, we had six or seven mangy harriers and beagles belonging to the house, I'll allow, and had had them for years, and that the Doctor put them down. But what good ever came of them? Only rows with all the keepers for ten miles round; and big-side Hare and Hounds is better fun ten times over. What else?"

No answer.

"Well, I won't go on. Think it over for yourselves: you'll find, I believe, that he don't meddle with any one that's worth keeping. And mind now, I say again, look out for squalie, if you will go your own way, and that way ain't the Doctor's, for it'll lead to grief. You all know I'm not the fellow to back a master through thick and thin. If I saw him stopping football, or cricket, or bathing, or sparring, I'd be as ready as any fellow to stand up about it. But he don't—he encourages them; didn't you see him out to-day for half an hour watching us?—(loud cheer for the Doctor)—and he's a strong true man, and a wise one too, and a public-school man too." (Cheers.) "And so let's stick to him, and talk no more rot, and drink his health as the head of the house. (Loud cheers.) And now I've done blowing up, and very glad I am I have done. But it's a solemn thing to be thinking of leaving a place which one has lived in and loved for years; and if one can say a word for the good of the old house at such a time, why, it should be said, whether bitter or sweet. If I had a son

proud of the house and you—ay, no one knows how proud—I shouldn't be blowing you up. And now let's get to singing. But before I sit down I must give you a toast to be drunk with three-times-three and all the honors. It's a toast which I hope every one of us, wherever we may go hereafter, will never fail to drink when he thinks of the brave bright days of his boyhood. It's a toast which should bind us all together, and to those who've gone before, and who'll come after us here. It is the dear old School-house—the best house of the best school in England!"

My dear boys, old and young, you who have belonged, or do belong, to other schools and other houses, don't begin throwing my poor little book about the room, and abusing me and it, and vowing you'll read no more when you get to this point. I allow you've provoked me for it. But, come now—would you, any of you, give a fig for a fellow who didn't believe in and stand up for his own house and his own school? You know you wouldn't. Then don't object to me cracking up my old school house, Rugby. Haven't I a right to do it, when I'm taking all the trouble of writing this true history for all of your benefits? If you ain't satisfied, go and write the history of your own houses in your own times, and say all you know for your own schools and houses, provided it's true, and I'll read it without abusing you.

The last words hit the audience in their weakest place; they had been not altogether enthusiastic at several parts of old Brooke's speech; but "the best house of the best school in England" was too much for them all, and carried even the sporting and drinking interests off their legs into rapturous applause, and (it is to be hoped) resolutions to lead a new life and remember old Brooke's words; which however, they didn't altogether do, as will appear hereafter.

But it required all old Brooke's popularity to carry down parts of his speech; especially that relating to the Doctor. For there are no such bigoted holders by established forms and customs, be they never so foolish or meaningless, as English schoolboys, at least as the schoolboy of our generation. We magnified into heroes every boy who had left, and looked upon him with awe and reverence, when he revisited the place a year or so afterwards, on his way to or from Oxford or Cambridge; and happy was the boy who remembered him, and sure of an audience as he expounded what he used to do and say, though it were sad enough stuff to make angels, not to say head-masters, weep.

We looked upon every trumpery little custom and habit which had obtained in the school as though it had been a law of the Medes and Persians, and regarded the infringement or variation of it as a sort of sacrilege. And the Doctor, than whom no man or boy had a stronger liking for old school customs, which were good and sensible, had, as has already been hinted, come into most decided collision with several which were neither the one nor the other. And as old Brooke had said, when he came into collision with boys or customs, there was nothing for them but to give in or take themselves off; because what he said had to be done, and no mistake about it. And this was beginning to be pretty clearly understood; the boys felt that there was a strong man over them, who would have things his own way; and hadn't yet learned that he was a wise and loving man also. His personal character and influence had not had time to make itself felt, except by a very few of the bigger boys with whom he came more directly in contact; and he was looked upon with great fear and dislike by the great majority even of his own house. For he had found school and school-house in state of monstrous license and misrule, and was still employed in the necessary but unpopular work of setting up order with a strong hand.

However, as has been said, old Brooke triumphed, and the boys cheered him, and then the Doctor. And then more songs came, and the healths of the other boys about to leave, who each made a speech, one flowery, another maudlin, a third prosy, and soon, which are not necessary to be here recorded.

Half-past nine struck in the middle of the performance of "Auld Lang Syne," a most obstreperous proceeding; during which there was an immense amount of standing with one foot on the table, knocking mugs together and shaking hands, without which accompaniments it seems impossible for the youth of Britain to take part in that famous old song. The under-porter of the School-house entered during the performance, bearing five or six long wooden candlesticks, with lighted tapers in them, which he proceeded to stick into their holes in such part of the great table as he could get at; and then stood on side the ring on the end of the song, when he was greeted with shouts.

"Bill, you old muff, the half-hour hasn't struck," "Here Bill, drink some cocktail," "Sing us a song, old boy," "Don't you wish you may get the table?" Bill drank the proffered cocktail not unwillingly, and putting down the empty glass, remonstrated, "Now, gentlemen, there's only ten minutes to prayers, and we must get the hall straight."

Shouts of "No, no!" and a violent effort to sing up "Billy Taylor" for the third time. Bill, appearing to old Brooke, who got up and stepped to the table. "Now then, lend a hand, and sing us a song, and then the time will be over. The first verse is 'The Old School House,' and the second is 'The Old School House,' and the third is 'The Old School House,' and the fourth is 'The Old School House,' and the fifth is 'The Old School House,' and the sixth is 'The Old School House,' and the seventh is 'The Old School House,' and the eighth is 'The Old School House,' and the ninth is 'The Old School House,' and the tenth is 'The Old School House,' and the eleventh is 'The Old School House,' and the twelfth is 'The Old School House,' and the thirteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the fourteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the fifteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the sixteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the seventeenth is 'The Old School House,' and the eighteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the nineteenth is 'The Old School House,' and the twentieth is 'The Old School House,' and the twenty-first is 'The Old School House,' and the twenty-second is 'The Old School House,' and the twenty-third is 'The Old 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By the time that the call-up-over had rang, Tom and his new comrades were all down-dressed in their best clothes, and he had the satisfaction of answering "here" to his sergeant.

First thing, the parade of the whole regiment in front of the balcony of the fort. And then came the drill, and a short parade of the company before the first, second and third platoons. It was very well done, they had been drilled by a good sergeant who told away last time that he would



It was a fine November morning, and the close noon became alive with boys of all ages, who sauntered about on the grass, or walked round the gravel-walk, in parties of two or three. East, still doing the cicerone, pointed out all the remarkable characters to Tom as they passed: Osbert, who could throw a cricket ball from the little-side ground over the rook trees to the Doctor's wall; Gray, who had got the Balliol scholarship, and, what East evidently thought of much more importance, a half-holiday for the School by his success; Thorne, who had run ten miles in two minutes over the hour; Black, who had held his own against the cock of the town in the last row with the louts; and many more heroes, who then and there walked about and were worshipped, all trace of whom has long since vanished from the scene of their fame; and the fourth-form boy who reads their names rudely out on the old ball tables, or painted on the big side-cupboard (if ball tables and big side-cupboards still exist), wonders what manner of boys they were. It will be the same with you who wonder, my sons, whatever your prowess may be, in cricket, or scholarship, or football. Two or three years more or less, and then the steadily advancing, blessed wave will pass over your names, as it has passed over ours. Nevertheless, play your games and do your work manfully—see only that that be done, and let the remembrance of it take care of itself.

The chapel-bell began to ring at a quarter to eleven, and Tom got in early and took his place in the lowest row; and tried to construe the Greek text which was inscribed over the door with the slightest possible success, and wondered which of the masters, who walked down the chapel and took their seats in the exalted boxes at the end, would be his lord. And then came the closing of the doors, and the Doctor in his robes, and the service, which, however, didn't impress him much, for his feelings of wonder and curiosity, was too strong. And the boy on one side of him was scratching his name on the oak panelling in front, and he couldn't help watching to see what the name was, and whether it was well scratched; and the boy on the other side went to sleep and kept falling against him; and on the whole, though many boys even in that part of the School were serious and attentive, the general atmosphere was by no means devotional; and when he got out into the clove again, he didn't feel at all comfortable, or as if he had been to church.

But at afternoon chapel it was quite another thing. He had spent the time after dinner in writing home to his mother, and so was in a better frame of mind; and his first curiosity was over, and he could attend more to the service. As the hymn after the prayers was being sung, and the chapel was getting a little dark, he was beginning to feel that he had been really worshipping. And then came that great event in his, as in every Rugby boy's life of that day—the first sermon from the Doctor.

More worthy pens than mine have described that scene:—the oak pulpit standing out by itself above the School seats; the tall gallant form, the kindling eye, the voice, now soft as the low note of a flute, now clear and stirring as the call of the light infantry bugle, of him who stood there Sunday after Sunday, witnessing and pleading for his Lord, the King of righteousness and love and glory, with whose spirit he was filled, and in whose power he spoke; the long lines of young faces, rising tier above tier down the whole length of the chapel, from the little boy's who has just left his mother to the young man's who was going out next week into the great world rejoicing in his strength. It was a great and solemn sight, and never more so than at this time of the year, when the only lights in the chapel were in the pulpit and at the seats of the prepositors of the week, and the soft twilight stole over the rest of the chapel, deepening into darkness in the high gallery behind the organ.

But what was it, after all, which seized and held these three hundred boys, dragging them out of themselves, willing or unwilling, for twenty minutes, on Sunday afternoon? True, there always were boys scattered up and down the school, who in heart and head were worthy to hear and able to carry away the deepest and wisest words there spoken. But these were a minority always, generally a very small one, often so small a one as to be countable on the fingers of your hand. What was it that moved and held us, the rest of the three hundred reckless, childish boys, who feared the doctor with all our hearts, and very little besides in heaven or earth: who thought more of our sets in the school than of the Church of Christ, and put the traditions of Rugby and the public opinion of boys in our daily life above the laws of God? We couldn't enter into half that we heard; we hadn't the knowledge of our own hearts or the knowledge of one another; and little enough of the faith, hope, and love needed to that end. But we listened, as all boys in their better moods will listen (ay, and men too, for the matter of that), to a man whom we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength, striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was not the cold, clear voice of one giving advice and warning; it was the bright light to those who were groping in the dark, and the warm, friendly voice of one who was helping for us and by us, and encouraging us to help him and one another, and the world. And so we went, and went, and went, but surely and steadily on the

whole, was brought home to the young boy, for the first time, the meaning of his life: that it was no fool's or sluggard's paradise into which he had wandered by chance, but a battle-field ordained from of old, where there are no spectators, but the youngest must take his side, and the stakes are life and death. And he who roused this consciousness in them showed them at the same time, by every word he spoke in the pulpit, and by his whole daily life, how that battle was to be fought; and stood there before them their fellow-soldier and the captain of their band. The true sort of captain, too, for a boy's army, one who had no misgivings and gave no uncertain word of command, and, let who would yield or make truce, would fight the fight out (so every boy felt) to the last gasp and the last drop of blood. Other sides of his character might take hold of and influence boys here and there, but it was his thoroughness and undaunted courage which more than any thing else won his way to the hearts of the great mass of those on whom he left his mark, and made them believe first in him, and then in his Master.

It was this quality above all others which moved such boys as our hero, who had nothing whatever remarkable about him except excess of boyishness, by which I mean animal life in its fullest measure, good nature and honest impulses, hatred of injustice and meanness, and thoughtlessness enough to sink a three-decker. And so, during the next two years in which it was more than doubtful whether he would get good or evil from the School, and before any steady purpose or principle grew up in him, whatever his week's sins and shortcomings might have been, he hardly ever left the chapel on Sunday evenings without a serious resolve to stand by and follow the Doctor, and a feeling that it was only cowardice (the incarnation of all other sins in such a boy's mind) which hindered him from doing so with all his heart.

The next day Tom was duly placed in the third form, and began his lessons in a corner of the big School. He found the work very easy, as he had been well grounded and knew his grammar by heart; and, as he had no intimate companion to make him idle (East and his other School-house friends being in the lower-fourth, the form above him), soon gained golden opinions from his master, who said he was placed too low, and should be put out at the end of the half year. So all went well with him in School, and he wrote the most flourishing letters home to his mother, full of his own success, and the unspeakable delights of a public school.

In the house, too, all went well. The end of the half-year was drawing near, which kept everybody in a good humor, and the house was ruled well and strongly by Warner and Brooke. True, the general system was rough and hard, and there was bullying in nooks and corners, bad signs for the future, but it never got farther, or dared show itself openly, staking about the passages and hall and bedrooms, and making the life of the small boys a continual fear.

Tom, as a new boy, was of right excused fagging for the first month, but in his enthusiasm for his new life this privilege hardly pleased him; and East and others of his young friends discovering this, kindly allowed him to indulge his fancy, and take their turns at night-fagging and cleaning studies. These were the principal duties of the fags in the house. From supper until midnight three fags taken in order, stood in the passages and answered any præpostor who called fag, racing to the door, the last comer having to do the work. This consisted generally of going to the buttery for beer and bread and cheese (for the great men did not sup with the rest, but had each his own allowance in his study or the fifth-form room), cleaning candlesticks and putting in new candles, toasting cheese, bottling beer, and carrying messages about the house; and Tom, in the first blush of his hero-worship, felt it a high privilege to receive orders from, and be the bearer of the supper of old Brooke. And besides this night work, each præpostor had three or four fags specially allotted to him, of whom he was supposed to be the guide, philosopher and friend, and who in return for these good offices had to clean out his study every morning by turns, directly after first lesson and before he returned from breakfast. And the pleasure of seeing the great men's studies, and looking at their pictures and peeping into their books, made Tom a ready substitute for any boy who was too lazy to do his own work. And so he soon gained the character of a good-natured willing fellow, who was ready to do a turn for any one.

In all the games too he joined with all his heart, and soon became well versed in all the mysteries of football, by continual practice at the school-house little-side, which played daily.

The only incident worth recording here, however, was his first run at Hare-and-bounds. On the last Tuesday but one of the half-year, he was passing through the hall after dinner, when he was hailed with shouts from Tadpole and several other fags seated at one of the long tables, the chorus of which was, "Come and help us tear up scent."

Tom approached the table in obedience to the mysterious summons, always ready to help, and found the party engaged in tearing up old newspapers, copy-books, and magazines into small pieces, with which they were filling four large

'It's the turn of our house to find scent for

side Hare-and-bounds," exclaimed Tadpole; "tea away, there's no time to lose before calling-over."

"I think it's a great shame," said another small boy, "to have such a hard run for the last day."

"Which run is it?" said Tadpole.

"On, the Barby run, I bear," answered the other; "nine miles at least, and hard ground; no chance of getting in at the finish, unless you're a first-rate scud."

"Well, I'm going to have a try," said Tadpole; "it's the last run of the half, and if a fellow gets in at the end, big-side stands ale and bread and cheese, and a bowl of punch; and the Cuck's such a famous place for ale."

"I should like to try, too," said Tom.

"Well then, leave your waistcoat behind, and listen at the door, after the calling-over, and you'll hear where the meet is."

After calling-over, sure enough, there were two boys at the door, calling out, "Big-side Hare-and-bounds meet at White Hall;" and Tom, having kirked himself with leather strap, and left all superfluous clothing behind, set off to White Hall, an old wale-ended house some quarter of a mile from the town, with East, whom he had persuaded to join, notwithstanding his prophesy that they could never get in, as it was the hardest run of the year.

At the meet they found some forty or fifty boys, and Tom felt sure, from having seen many of them run at football, that he and East were more likely to get in than they.

After a few minutes' waiting, two well-known runners, chosen for the hares, buckled on the four bags filled with scent, compared their watches with those of young Brooke and Thorne, and started off at a long shagging trot across the fields in the direction of Barby.

Then the hounds clustered round Thorne, who explained shortly, "They're to have six minutes' law. We run into the Cock, and every one who comes in within a quarter of an hour of the hares'll be counted, if he has been round Barbby Caurch." Then came a minute's pause or so, and then the watches are pocketed, and the pack is led through the gate-way into the field which the hares had first crossed. Here they break into a trot, scattering over the field to find the first traces of the scent which the hares throw out as they go along. The old hounds make straight for the likely points, and in a minute a cry of "forward" comes from one of them, and the whole pack quickening their pace make for the spot, while the boy who hit the scent first, and the two or three nearest to him, are over the first fence, and making play along the hedge-row in the long grass-field beyond. The rest of the pack rush at the gap already made, and scramble through, jostling one another. "Forward" again, before they are half through; the pace quickens into a sharp run, the tail hounds all straining to get up to the lucky leaders. They are gallant hares, and the scent lies thick right across another meadow and into a ploughed field, where the pace begins to tell; then over a good wattle with a ditch on the other side, and down a large pasture studded with old thorns, which slopes down to the first brook; the great Leicestershire sheep charge away across the field as the pack comes racing down the slope. The brook is a small one, and the scent lies right ahead up the opposite slope, and as thick as ever; not a turn or a check to favor the tail hounds, who strain on, now trailing in a long line, many a youngster beginning to drag his legs heavily, and feel his heart break like a hammer, and the bad plucked ones thinking that after all it isn't worth while to keep it up.

Tom, East, and the Tadpole had a good start, and are well up for such young hands, and, after rising the slope and crossing the next field, find themselves up with the leading hounds, who have overrun the scent, and are trying back; they have come a mile and a half in about eleven minutes, a pace which shows that it is the last day. About twenty-five of the original starters only show here, the rest having already given in; the leaders are busy making cuts into the fields on the left and right, and the others get their second winds.

Then comes the cry of "forward" again, from Young Brooke, from the extreme left, and the pack settles down to work again steadily and doggedly, the whole keeping pretty well together. The scent, though still good, is not so thick; there is no need of that, for in this part of the run every one knows the line which must be taken, and so there are no casts to be made, but good downright running and fencing to be done. All who are now up mean coming in, and they come to the foot of Barby Hill without losing more than two or three more of the pack. This last straight two miles and a half is always a vantage-ground for the hounds, and the hares know it well; they are generally viewed on the side of Barby Hill, and all eyes are on the lookout for them to-day. But not a sign of them appears, so now will be the hard work for the hounds, and there is nothing for it but to cast about for the scent, for it is now the hares' turn, and they may baffle the pack dreadfully in the next two miles.

It fares it now with our youngsters that they are school-house boys, and so follow Young Tom. For he takes the wilds round to the school-house, and his companions, and never then returns. But if you would consider for a moment, you should see, you would know that the Cock, where the run ends, and the good run will be going, lies far out to the right on the











[illegible]

Flashman, as it said, was about seventeen years old, and big and strong of his age. He played well at all games where pluck wasn't much wanted, and managed generally to keep up appearances where it was; and having a bluff, off-hand manner, which passed for heartiness, and considerable powers of being pleasant when he liked, went down with the school in general for a good fellow enough. Even in the school-house, by dint of his command of money, the constant supply of good things which he kept up, and his adroit readiness, he had managed to make himself not only tolerated but rather popular amongst his own contemporaries; although Young Brooke scarcely spoke to him, and one or two others of the right sort showed their opinions of him whenever a chance offered. But the wrong sort happened to be in the ascendant just now, and so Flashman was a born-made chum for them. By this time, having become paid enough, Flashman returned to his quarters, and had a long time, which could hardly be called his vacation, or leave of absence from the rest of the house. One by one most of the other rebels fell away from them, while Flashman's cause prospered, and several more from the ranks of the rebels came to look upon him as they passed around the house. By keeping out of bounds, or at all events out of the house and grounds, all day, and carefully barring the doors at night, East and Tom managed to avoid what would have been a very disagreeable situation, and as they could look on only with the

drawn then towards old Diggs, who, in an uncerth way, began to take a good deal of notice of them. and once or twice came to their study when Flashman was there, who immediately decamped in consequence. The boys thought that Diggs must have been watching.

Flashman's brutality and bullying had disgusted most even of his intimate friends, and his cowardice was once more made plain to the House: for Diggs had encountered him on the morning after a fresh outrage (the victim of which was Tom, who had been brutally roasted by him, as a flag, on account of a slight disagreement), and after high words on both sides had struck him, and the blow was not returned. However, Flashy was not unaccustomed to this sort of thing, and had lived through as awkward affairs before, and, as Diggs had said, had fed and toadied himself back into favor again.

Well, one evening in Richmond House, Tom and East were in the Hall. They occupied seats before the fire nearest the door, while Dicks sprawled as usual before the farther fire. He was busy with a copy of verses, and East and Tom were chatting together in whispers by the light of the fire, and spicing a favorite old ditty, but which had sprung. Presently a step came down the bottom passage; they listened a moment, assured themselves that it wasn't a postmaster, and then went on with their work, and the door swung open, and in walked Dick. He didn't see Dicks, and thought it a good time to keep his hand in; and as the boys don't move for him, struck one of them, to make them get out of his way.

Flashman was taken aback, and retreated for a few paces. He looked at Tom "S. W. S." and said: "Yes, 'S. W. S.' I'm a good deal older than you are, but I'm not much advanced on Flashman, with clenched fists and beating hearts. They were about up to the neck in the mud, but tough boys of their age, and in the excitement; while he, though strong and big, was young and full of life. He was a good deal older than I was, and with the exception of a few years, he was



however, Flashman couldn't swallow such an insult as this; besides he was confident of having easy work, and so faced the boys, saying, "You impudent young blackguards!" Before he could finish his abuse, they rushed in on him, and began pummeling at all of him which they could reach. He hit out wildly and savagely, but the full force of his blows didn't tell, they were too near him. It was long odds, though, in point of strength, and in another minute Tom went spinning backward over a form, and Flashman turned to demolish East, with a savage grin. But now Diggs jumped down from the table on which he had seated himself. "Stop there," shouted he, "the round's over—half a minute time allowed."

"What the—! is it to you?" faltered Flashman, who began to lose heart.

"I'm going to see fair, I tell you," said Diggs with a grin, and snapping his great red fingers; "taint fair for you to be fighting one of them at a time. Are you ready, Brown? Time's up."

The small boys rushed in again. Closing they saw was their best chance, and Flashman was wilder and more flurried than ever: he caught East by the throat, and tried to force him back on the iron-bound table; Tom grasped his waist, and remembering the old throw he had learned in the Vale from Harry Winburn, crooked his leg inside Flashman's, and threw his whole weight forward. The three tottered for a moment, and then over they went on to the floor, Flashman striking his head against a form in the Hall.

The two youngsters sprang to their legs, but he lay there still. They began to be frightened. Tom stooped down, and then cried out, scared out of his wits, "He's bleeding awfully; come here, East, Diggs—he's dying!"

"Not he," said Diggs, getting leisurely off the table; "it's all sham—he's only afraid to fight it out."

East was as frightened as Tom. Diggs lifted Flashman's head, and he groaned.

"What's the matter?" shouted Diggs.

"My skull's fractured," sobbed Flashman.

"Oh, let me run for the housekeeper," cried Tom. "What shall we do?"

"Fiddle-ticks! it's nothing but the skin broken," said the relentless Diggs, feeling his head. "Cold water and a bit of rag's all he'll want."

"Let me go," said Flashman, sulkily, sitting up; "I don't want your help."

"We're really very sorry," began East.

"Hug your sorrow," answered Flashman, holding his handkerchief to the place; "you shall pay for this, I can tell you, both of you," and he walked out of the Hall.

"He can't be very bad," said Tom with a deep sigh, much relieved to see his enemy march so well.

"Not he," said Diggs, "and you'll see you won't be troubled with him any more. But, I say, your head's broken too—your collar is covered with blood."

"Is it, though?" said Tom, putting up his hand; "I didn't know it."

"Well, mop it up, or you'll have your jacket spotted. And you have got a nasty eye. Send; you'd better go and bathe it well in cold water."

"Clean enough, too, if we've done with our old friend Flashy," said East, as they made off up stairs to bathe their wounds.

They had done with Flashman in one sense, for he never laid finger on either of them again; but whatever hard a spiteful heart and venomous tongue could do them, he took care should be done. Only throw dirt enough, and some of it is sure to stick; and so it was with the fifth form and the bigger boys in general, with whom he associated more or less, and they not at all. Flashman managed to get Tom and East into disfavor, which did not wear off for some time after the author of it had disappeared from the School world. This event, much prayed for by the small fry in general, took place a few months after the above encounter. One fine summer evening Flashman had been regaling himself on a gin-punch, at Brownover; and having exceeded his usual limit, started home uproariously. He fell in with a friend or two coming back from bathing, proposed a glass of beer, to which they assented, the weather being hot, and they thirsty souls, and unaware of the quantity of drink which Flashman had already on board. The short result was, that Flashy became heartily drunk; they tried to get him along, but couldn't; so they chartered a hurdle and two men to carry him. One of the masters came upon them, and they naturally enough fled. The flight of the rest raised the master's suspicions, and the good angel of the fag lured him to examine the freight, and, after a consultation, to convey the hurdle himself up to the school-house, and the Doctor, who had long since been on Flashman, arranged for his withdrawal next morning.

Flashy was gone, and boys too, do, lives after him: Flashy was gone, but our boys, as hinted above, still felt the effects of his hate. Besides, they had been the movers of the strike against unlawful fagging. The cause was righteous—the result had been triumphant to a great extent; but the best of the fifth, even those who had never fagged the small boys, or had given up the practice cheerfully, couldn't help feeling a grudge against the first rebels. After all, their own lot had been a hard one, and they had no doubt; so just, indeed, that they had at once to

his set, the rebels must have given way at once. They couldn't help, on the whole, being kind that they had so acted, and that the resistance had been successful against such of their own form as had shown light; they felt that law and order had gained thereby, but the ring-leaders they couldn't quite pardon at once. "Confoundedly cozy these young rascals will get, if we don't mind," was the general feeling.

So it is and must be always, my dear boys. If the Angel Gabriel were to come down from heaven, and head a successful rising against the most amiable and uprightest vested interest which this poor old world groans under, he would most certainly lose his character for many years, probably for centuries, not only with the upholders of said vested interest, but with the respectable mass of the people whom he had delivered. They wouldn't ask him to dinner, or let their names appear with his in the papers; they would be very careful how they spoke of him in the Paraver, or at their clubs. What can we expect, then, when we have only poor gallant blundering men like Kossuth, Garibaldi, Mazzini, and righteous causes which do not triumph in their hands; men who have holes enough in their armor, God knows, easy to be hit by respectabilities sitting in their lounging chairs, and having large balances at their bankers! But you are brave gallant boys, who hate easy-chairs, and have no balances or bankers. You only want to have your head set straight, to take the right side; so bear it in mind that majorities, especially respectable ones, are nine times out of ten in the wrong, and that if you see a man or boy striving earnestly on the weak side, however wrong-headed or blundering he may be, you are not to go and join the cry against him. If you can't join him and help him, and make him wiser, at any rate remember that he has found something in the world which he will fight and suffer for, which is just what you have got to do for yourselves; and so think and speak of him tenderly.

So East and Tom, the Tadpole, and one or two more became a sort of young Independents, their hands against every one, and every one's hand against them. It has been already told how they got to war with the masters and the fifth form, and with the sixth it was much the same. They saw the prepsters cowed by or joining with the fifth, and taking the cowardly side; so they didn't respect them, and rendered no willing obedience. It had been one thing to crush out studies for sons of heroes like O. I. Brooke, but was quite another to do the like for Snooks and Green, who had never faced a good scrummage at football, and couldn't keep the passages in order at night. So they only scurried through their fagging just well enough to escape a licking, and not always that, and got the character of sulky, unwilling fags. In the fifth-form room, after supper, when such matters were often discussed and arranged, their names were for ever coming up.

"I say, Green," Snooks began one night, "isn't that new boy, Harrison, your fag?"

"Yes; why?"

"Oh, I know something of him at home, and should like to excuse him—will you swap?"

"Who will you give me?"

"Well, let's see, there's Willis, Johnson—No, that won't do. Yes, I have it, there's young East; I'll give you him."

"Don't you wish you may get it?" replied Green. "I'll give you two for Willis, if you like."

"Who then?" asks Snooks.

"Hall and Brown."

"Wouldn't have 'em at a gift."

"Better than East, though; for they ain't quite so sharp," said Green, getting up and leaning his back against the mantel-piece—he wasn't a bad fellow, and couldn't help not being able to put down the unruly fifth form. His eye twinkled as he went on, "Did I ever tell you how the young vagabond sold me last half?"

"No—how?"

"Well, he never half cleaned my study out, only just stuck the candlesticks in the cupboard, and swept the crumbs on the floor. So at last I was mortal angry, and had him up, and I made him go through the whole performance under my eyes. The dust the young scamp made nearly choked me, and showed that he hadn't swept the carpet before. Well, when it was all finished, 'Now, young gentleman,' says I, 'mind, I expect this to be done every morning—floor swept, table-cloth taken off and shaken, and every thing dusted.' 'Very well,' grunts he. Not a bit of it, though—I was quite sure in a day or two that he never took the table-cloth off even. So I laid a trap for him: I tore up some paper and put half a dozen bits on my table one night, and the cloth over them as usual. Next morning, after breakfast, up I came, peered off the cloth, and sure enough there was the paper, which fluttered down on the floor. I was in a towering rage. 'I've got you now,' says I, and sent for him, where I sat out my cane. Up he came, as cool as you please, with his hands in his pockets. 'Didn't I tell you to shake my table-cloth every morning?' roared I. 'Yes,' says he. 'Did you do it this morning?' 'Yes,' says he. 'You young scamp! I put those pieces of paper on the table last night, and if you'd taken the table-cloth off you'd have seen them, so I'm going to give you a good licking.' Then my young scamp took out a pocket of bits of paper, and holds them out to me. There was Willis on one, Johnson on another, and so on; and I was in a rage. The young scamp had

found my trap out, taken away my paper, and I put some of his there, every bit ear-marked. I'd a great deal to lick him for his impudence, but, after all, one has no right to be laying traps, so I didn't. Of course I was at his mercy till the end of the half, and in his weeks my study was so frowzy that I couldn't sit in it."

"They spoil one's things so, too," chimed in a third boy. "Hall and Brown were night-fags last week: I called in, and gave them my candlesticks to clean; away they went, and didn't appear again. When they'd had time enough to clean them three times over, I went out to look after them. They weren't in the passages, so down I went into the Hall, where I heard music, and there I found them sitting on the table, listening to Johnson, who was playing the flute, and my candlesticks stuck between the bars wed into the fire, red hot, clean spoiled; they've never stood straight since, and I must get some more. However, I gave them both a good licking; that's one comfort."

Such were the sort of scrapes they were always getting into; and so, partly by their own faults, partly from circumstances, partly from the faults of others, they found themselves outlaws, ticket-of-leave men, or what you will in that line; in short, dangerous parties, and lived the sort of hand-to-mouth, wild, reckless life which such parties generally have to put up with. Nevertheless, they never quite lost favor with Young Brooke, who was now the cock of the House, and just getting into the sixth; and Diggs stuck to him like a man, and gave them store of good advice, by which they never in the least profited.

And even after the House mended, and law and order had been restored, which soon happened after Young Brooke and Diggs got into the sixth, they couldn't easily or at once return into the paths of steadiness, and many of the old wild outlaws had to be stuck to them as badly as ever. While they had been quite little boys, the scrapes they got into in the School hadn't much mattered to any one; but now they were in the upper school, all wrong-doers from which were sent up straight to the Doctor at once; so they began to come under his notice; and as they were a sort of leaders in a small way amongst their own contemporaries, his eye, which was everywhere, was upon them.

It was a toss-up whether they turned out well or ill, and so they were just the boys who caused most anxiety to such a master. You have been told of the first occasion on which they were sent up to the Doctor, and the remembrance of it was so present, that they had much less fear of him than most boys of their standing had. "It's all his looks," Tom used to say to East, "that frightens fellows; don't you remember, he never said anything to us my first half-year, for being an hour late for locking up?"

The next time Tom came before him, however, the interview was of a very different kind. It happened just about the time at which we have now arrived, and was the first of a series of scrapes into which our hero managed now to tumble.

The river Avon at Rugby is a slow and not very clear stream, in which eel, dace, roach, and other coarse fish are (or were) plentiful enough, together with a fair sprinkling of small jack, but no fish worth sixpence either for sport or food. It is, however, a capital river for bathing, as it has many nice small pools and several good reaches for swimming, all within about a mile of one another, and at an easy twenty minutes' walk from the school. This mile of water is rented, or used to be rented, for bathing purposes, by the Trustees of the School, for the boys.

The footpath to Brownover crosses the river by "the Planks," a curious old single-plank bridge, running fifty or sixty yards into the flat meadows on each side of the river—for in the winter there are frequent floods. Above the Planks were the bathing-places for the smaller boys—Smith's, the first bathing place where a new boy had to begin, until they had proved to the bathing men (three steady individuals who were paid to attend daily through the summer to prevent accidents) that they could swim pretty decently, when they were allowed to go on to Austey's, about one hundred and fifty yards below. Here there was a hole about six feet deep and twelve feet across, over which the pulling archers struggled to the opposite side, and thought no small feat of themselves for having been out of their depths. Below the Planks came larger and deeper holes, the first of which was Willis's, and the last Swat's, a famous hole, ten or twelve feet deep in parts, and thirty yards across, from which there was a fine swimming reach that down to the Mill. Swat's was reserved for the sixth and fifth forms, and had a spring board and two sets of steps: the others had one set of steps each, and were used indifferently by all the lower fags, though even the new boys used them more to one hole than to another. The School-house at this time affected Warlaw's hole, and Tom and East, who had learnt to swim like fishes, were to be found there as regular as the clock through the summer, always twice, and often three times a day.

Now the boys either had, or fancied they had, a right to fish at their pleasure over the whole of the sport of the river, and would not understand that the right of a fag only extended to the River-side. As a fag would have no right to fish, and would be opposite bank, and a fag







answer to the puzzled look of his lieutenant, explained shortly:

"A gross case of bullying. Wharton, the head of the house, is a very good fellow, but slight and weak, and severe physical pain is the only way to deal with such a case; so I have asked Holmes to take it up. He is very careful and trustworthy, and has plenty of strength. I wish all the sixth had as much. We must have it here, if we are to keep order at all."

Now, I don't want any wisecracks to read this book; but if they should, of course they will pick up their long ears and howl, or rather bray, at the above story. Very good, I don't object; but what I have to add for you boys is this, that Holmes called a levy of his house after breakfast next morning, made them a speech on the case of bullying in question, and then gave the bully a "good sound thrashing;" and that years afterwards that boy sought out Holmes, and thanked him, saying it had been the kindest act which had ever been done upon him, and the turning-point in his character; and a very good fellow he became, and a credit to his School.

After some other talk between them, the Doctor said, "I want to speak to you about two boys in your form, East and Brown: I have just been speaking to them. What do you think of them?"

"Well, they are not hard workers, and are very thoughtless and full of spirits—but I can't help liking them. I think they are sound good fellows at the bottom."

"I'm glad of it. I think so too. But they make me very uneasy. They are taking the lead a good deal amongst the fags in my house, for they are very active, bold fellows. I should be sorry to lose them, but I shan't let them stay if I don't see them gaining character and manliness. In another year they may do great harm to all the younger boys."

"Oh, I hope you won't send them away," pleaded their master.

"Not if I can help it. But now, I never feel sure, after any half-holiday, that I shan't have to flog one of them the next morning, for some foolish, thoughtless scrape. I quite dread seeing either of them."

They were both silent for a minute. Presently the Doctor began again:

"They don't feel that they have any duty or work to do in the School, and how is one to make them feel it?"

"I think if either of them had some little boy to take care of, it would steady them. Brown is the most reckless of the two, I should say; East wouldn't get into so many scrapes without him."

"Well," said the Doctor, with something like a sigh, "I'll think of it." And they went on to talk of other subjects.

## PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

#### HOW THE TIDE TURNED.

The turning-point in our hero's school career had now come, and the manner of it was as follows: On the evening of the first day of the next half-year, Tom, East, and another School-house boy who had just been dropped at the Spread Eagle, by the old Regulator, rushed into the matron's room in high spirits, such as all real boys are in when they first get back, however fond they may be of home.

"Well, Mrs. Wixie," shouted one, seizing on the methodical, active, little dark-eyed woman, who was busy stowing away the linen of the boys who had already arrived into their several pigeon-holes, "here we are again you see, as jolly as ever. Let us help you put the things away."

"And Mary," cried another (she was called indifferently by either name), "who's come back! Has the Doctor made old Jones leave? How many new boys are there?"

"Am I and East to have Gray's study? You know you promised to get it for us if you could," shouted Tom.

"And am I to sleep in No. 4?" roared East.

"How's old Sam and Bogie and Sally?"

"Bless the boys!" cries Mary, at last getting in a word, "why, you'll shake me to death. There, now do go away up to the housekeeper's room and get your suppers; you know I haven't time to talk—you'll find plenty more in the house. Now, Master East, do let those things alone—you're mixing up three new boys' things." And she rushed at East, who escaped round the open trunk, holding up a prize.

"Hullo, look here, Tommy," shouted he, "there's fun!" and he brandished above his head some pretty little nightcaps, beautifully made and marked, the work of loving fingers in some distant country home. The kind mother and sisters who sewed that delicate stitching with achingly little thought of the trouble they were incurring on the young head for which they were meant. The little matron was wiser, and started at the caps from East before he could look at the label on them.

"Now, Master East, I shan't be very angry if you don't go," said she; "there's some capital cold beef and pickles up stairs, and I won't have you old boys in my room first night."

"I'll fetch the pickles! Come along, Tommy; we shall find out who the young Count is, I'll be bound; I hope he'll sleep

in my room. Mary's always vicious first week."

As the boys turned to leave the room, the matron touched Tom's arm, and said: "Master Brown, please stop a minute; I want to speak to you."

"Very well, Mary. I'll come in a minute, East; don't finish the pickles—"

"Oh, Master Brown," went on the little matron, when the rest had gone, "you're to have Gray's study, Mrs. Arnold says. And she wants you to take in this young gentleman. He's a new boy, and thirteen years old, though he don't look it. He's very delicate, and has never been from home before. And I told Mrs. Arnold I thought you'd be kind to him, and see that they don't bully him at first. He's put into your form, and I've given him the bed next to yours in number 4; so East can't sleep there this half."

Tom was rather put about by this speech. He had got the double study which he coveted, but here were conditions attached which greatly moderated his joy. He looked across the room, and in the far corner of the sofa was aware of a slight pale boy, with large blue eyes and light fair hair, who seemed ready to shrink through the floor. He saw at a glance that the little stranger was just the boy whose first half-year at a public school would be misery to himself if he were left alone, or constant anxiety to any one who meant to see him through his troubles. Tom was too honest to take in the youngster and then let him shift for himself; and if he took him as his chum instead of East, where were all his pet plans of having a bottled-beer cellar under his window, and making night lines and slings, and plotting expeditions to Brownover Mills and Caldecott's Spinney? East and he had made up their minds to get this study, and then every night from locking-up till ten they would be together to talk about fishing, drink bottled-beer, read Marryat's novels, and sort birds' eggs. And this new boy would most likely never go out of the close, and would be afraid of wet feet, and always getting laughed at, and called Molly, or Jenny, or some derogatory feminine nickname.

The matron watched him for a moment, and saw what was passing in his mind, and so like a wise negotiator, threw in an appeal to his warm heart. "Poor little fellow," said she in almost a whisper, "his father's dead, and he's got no brothers. And his mamma, such a kind sweet lady, almost broke her heart at leaving him this morning; and she said one of his sisters was like to die of decline, and so—"

"Well, well," burst in Tom, with something like a sigh at the effort, "I suppose I must give up East. Come along, young up. What's your name? We'll go and have some supper, and then I'll show you our study."

"His name's George Arthur," said the matron, walking up to him with Tom, who grasped his delicate hand as the proper preliminary to making a chum of him, and felt as if he could have blown him away. "I've had his books and things put into the study, which his mamma has had new papered, and the sofa covered, and new green-baize curtains over the door." (The diplomatic matron threw this in, to show that the new boy was contributing largely to the partnership comforts.) "And Mrs. Arnold told me to say," she added, "that she should like you both to come up to tea with her. You know the way, Master Brown, and the things are just gone up, I know."

Here was an announcement for Master Tom! He was to go up to tea the first night, just as if he were a sixth or fifth form boy, and of importance in the school world, instead of the most reckless young scapegrace amongst the fags. He felt himself lifted on to a higher social and moral platform at once. Nevertheless, he couldn't give up without a sigh the idea of the jolly supper in the housekeeper's room with East and the rest, and a rush round to all the studies of his friends afterwards, to pour out the deeds and wonders of the holidays, to plot fifty plans for the coming half-year, and to gather news of who had left, and what new boys had come, who had got who's study, and where the new preceptors slept. However, Tom consoled himself with thinking that he couldn't have done all this with the new boy at his heels, and so marched off along the passages to the Doctor's private house with his young charge in tow, in monstrous good humor with himself and all the world.

It is needless, and would be impertinent, to tell how the two young boys were received in that drawing-room. The lady who presided there is still living, and has carried with her to her peaceful home in the North, the respect and love of all those who ever felt and shared that gentle and high-bred hospitality. Ay, many is the brave heart now doing its work and bearing its load in country curacies, London chambers, under the Indian sun, and in Australian towns and clearings, which looks back with fond and grateful memory to that School-house drawing-room, and dates much of its highest and best training to the lessons learnt there.

Besides Mrs. Arnold and one or two of the elder children, there were one of the younger masters, young Brooke, who was now in the sixth, and had succeeded to his brother's position and influence, and another sixth-form boy talking together before the fire. The master and young Brooke, now a great strapping fellow six feet high, eighteen years old, and powerful as a coal-heaver, nodded kindly to Tom, to his intense glory, and then went on talking; the other did not notice them. The hostess, after a few kind words, which led the

boys once and insensibly to feel at their ease, and to begin talking to one another, left them with her own children while she finished a letter. The young ones got on so fast and well, Tom holding forth about a prodigious pony he had been riding out hunting, and hearing stories of the winter glories of the lakes, when tea came in, and immediately after the Doctor himself.

How frank, and kind, and manly was his greeting to the party by the fire! It did Tom's heart good to see him and young Brooke shake hands and look one another in the face; and he didn't fail to remark, that Brooke was nearly as tall and quite as broad as the Doctor. And his cup was full, when in another moment his master, turned to him with another warm shake of the hand, and, seemingly oblivious to all the late scrapes which he had been getting into, said, "Ah, Brown, you here! I hope you left your father and all well at home!"

"Yes, sir, quite well."

"And this is the little fellow who is to share your study. Well, he doesn't look as we should like to see him. He wants some Rugby air and cricket. And you must take him some good long walks, to Bilton Grange, and Caldecott's Spinney, and show him what a pretty country we have about here."

Tom wondered if the Doctor knew that his visits to Bilton Grange were for the purpose of taking rooks' nest (a proceeding strongly discountenanced by the owner thereof), and those to Caldecott's Spinney were prompted chiefly by the conveniences for setting night-lines. What didn't the Doctor know! And what a noble use he always made of it! He almost resolved to adjure rook-pies and night-lines forever. The tea went merrily off, the Doctor now talking of holiday doings, and then of the prospects of the half-year, what chances there were for the Balliol scholarship, whether the eleven would be a good one. Every body was at his ease, and every body felt that he, young as he might be, was of some use in the little School world, and had a work to do there.

Soon after tea the Doctor went off to his study, and the young boys a few minutes afterwards took their leave, and went out of the private door which led from the Doctor's house into the middle passage.

At the fire, at the farther end of the passage, was a crowd of boys in loud talk and laughter. There was a sudden pause when the door opened, and then a great shout of greeting, as Tom was recognized marching down the passage.

"Hullo, Brown, where do you come from?"

"Oh, I've been to tea with the Doctor," says Tom, with great dignity.

"My eye!" cried East. "Oh! so that's why Mary called you back, and you didn't come to supper. You lost something—that beef and pickles was no end good."

"I say, young fellow," cried Hall, detecting Arthur, and catching him by the collar, "what's your name? Where do you come from? How old are you?"

Tom saw Arthur shrink back, and look scared as the group turned to him, but thought it best to let him answer, just standing by his side to support in case of need.

"Arthur, sir. I come from Devonshire."

"Don't call me 'sir,' you young muff! How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"Can you sing?"

The poor boy was trembling and hesitating. Tom struck in—"You be hanged, Tadpole. He'll have to sing, whether he can or not. Saturday twelve weeks, and that's long enough off yet."

"Do you know him, Brown?"

"No! but he's my chum in Gray's old study, and it's near prayer-time, and I haven't had a look at it yet. Come along, Arthur."

Along went the two, Tom longing to get his charge safe under cover, where he might advise him on his deportment.

"What a queer chum for Tom Brown," was the comment at the fire; and it must be confessed, so thought Tom himself, as he lighted his candle, and surveyed the new green-baize curtains and the carpet and sofa with much satisfaction.

"I say, Arthur, what a brick your mother is to make us so cosy! But look here now: you must answer straight up when the fellows speak to you, and don't be afraid. If you're afraid you'll get bullied. And don't you say you can sing; and don't you ever talk about home, or your mother and sisters."

Poor little Arthur looked ready to cry.

"But please," said he, "mayn't I talk about home to you?"

"Oh yes, I like it. But don't talk to boys you don't know, or they'll call you home-sick, or mamma's darling, or some such stuff. What a jolly desk! Is that yours? And what stunning binding! Why, your school-books look like novels."

And Tom was soon deep in Arthur's school and chattels, all new and good enough for a fifth-form boy, and hardly thought of his friends outside till the prayer-bell rang.

I have already described the School-house prayers; they were the same on the first night as on the other nights, save for the gaps caused by the absence of those boys who came late, and the line of new boys who stood all together at the farther table—of all sorts and sizes, like young leaves with all their trouble to come, as I told my father and said to him when he was in the same position. His



thought of it as he looked at the line, and poor little Arthur standing with them, and as he was leading him up stairs to Number 4, directly after prayers, and showing him his bed. It was a huge high airy room, with two large windows looking on to the School close. There were twelve beds in the room; the one in the farthest corner by the fire-place occupied by the sixth-form boy who was responsible for the discipline of the room, and the rest by boys in the lower fifth and other junior forms, all fags (for the fifth-form boys as has been said, slept in rooms by themselves). Being fags, the eldest of them was not more than about sixteen years old, and were all bound to be up and in bed by ten; the sixth-form boys came to bed from ten to a quarter-past (at which time the old verger came round to put the candles out, except when they sat up to read).

Within a few minutes therefore of their entry, all the other boys who slept in Number 4 had come up. The little fellows went quietly to their own beds, and began undressing and talking to each other, in whispers, while the elder, amongst whom was Tom, sat chatting about on one another's beds, with their jackets and waistcoats off. Poor little Arthur was overwhelmed with the novelty of his position. The idea of sleeping in the room with strange boys had clearly never crossed his mind before, and was as painful as it was strange to him. He could hardly bear to take his jacket off; however, presently, with an effort, he came, and then he pruned and looked at Tom, who was sitting at the bottom of his bed talking and laughing.

"Please, Brown," he whispered, "may I wash my face and hands?"

"Of course, if you like," said Tom, staring; "that's your wash-hand-stand, under the window, second from your bed. You'll have to go down for more water in the morning if you use it all." And on he went with his talk, while Arthur stole timidly from between the beds out to his wash-hand-stand, and began his ablutions, thereby drawing for a moment on himself the attention of the room.

On went the talk and laughter. Arthur finished his washing and undressing, and put on his night-gown. He then looked round more nervously than ever. Two or three of the little boys were already in bed, sitting up with their chins on their knees. The light burned clear, the noise went on. It was a trying moment for the poor little lonely boy; however, this time he didn't ask Tom what he might or might not do, but dropped on his knees by his bedside, as he had done every day from his childhood, to open his heart to Him who heareth the cry and beareth the sorrows of the tender child, and the strong man in agony.

Tom was sitting at the bottom of his bed unlacing his boots, so that his back was toward Arthur, and he didn't see what had happened, and looked up in wonder at the sudden silence. Then two or three boys laughed and sneered, and a big brutal fellow, who was standing in the middle of the room, picked up a slipper, and shied it at the kneeling boy, calling him a snivelling young shaver. Then Tom saw the whole, and the next moment the boot he had just pulled off flew straight at the head of the bully, who had just time to throw up his arm and catch it on his elbow.

"Confound you, Brown, what's that for?" roared he, stamping with pain.

"Never mind what I mean," said Tom, stepping on the floor, every drop of blood in his body tingling; "if any fellow wants the other boot, he knows how to get it."

What would have been the result is doubtful, for at this moment the sixth-form boy came in, and not another word could be said. Tom and the rest rushed into bed and finished their undressing there, and the old verger, as punctual as the clock, had put out the candle in another minute, and toddled on to the next room, shutting their door with his usual "Good-night, gen'l'm'n."

There were many boys in the room by whom that little scene was taken to heart before they slept. But sleep seemed to have deserted the pillow of poor Tom. For some time his excitement, and the flood of memories which chased one another through his brain, kept him from thinking or resolving. His head throbbled, his heart leaped, and he could hardly keep himself from springing out of bed and rushing about the room. Then the thought of his own mother came across him, and the promise he had made at her knee, years ago, never to forget to kneel by his bedside, and give himself up to his Father, before he laid his head on the pillow, from which it might never rise; and he lay down gently and cried as if his heart would break. He was only fourteen years old.

It was no light act of courage in those days, my dear boys, for a little fellow to say his prayers publicly, even at Rugby. A few years later, when Arnold's manly piety had begun to leaven the school, the tables turned; before he died, in the School-house at least, and I believe in the dormitory, the rule was the other way. And over Tom's head came to some other boys. The first boy who came after he came to bed, and then a second, and then a third, and then a fourth, and then a fifth, and then a sixth, and then a seventh, and then an eighth, and then a ninth, and then a tenth, and then an eleventh, and then a twelfth, and then a thirteenth, and then a fourteenth, and then a fifteenth, and then a sixteenth, and then a seventeenth, and then an eighteenth, and then a nineteenth, and then a twentieth, and then a twenty-first, and then a twenty-second, and then a twenty-third, and then a twenty-fourth, and then a twenty-fifth, and then a twenty-sixth, and then a twenty-seventh, and then a twenty-eighth, and then a twenty-ninth, and then a thirtieth, and then a thirty-first, and then a thirty-second, and then a thirty-third, and then a thirty-fourth, and then a thirty-fifth, and then a thirty-sixth, and then a thirty-seventh, and then a thirty-eighth, and then a thirty-ninth, and then a fortieth, and then a forty-first, and then a forty-second, and then a 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"I'll have you both licked when I get out, that I will," rejoined the boy, beginning to snivel.

"Two can play at that game, mind you," said Tom, who had finished his examination of the list. "Now, you just listen here. We've just come across the lives' court, and Jones has four fags there already, two more than he wants. If he'd wanted us to change, he'd have stopped us himself. And here, you little blackguard, you've got seven names down on your list beside ours, and five of them School-house." Tom walked up to him, and jerked him on to his legs; he was by this time whining like a whipped puppy.

"Now just listen to me. We ain't going to fag for Jones. If you tell him you've sent us, we'll each of us give you such a thrashing as you'll remember." And Tom tore up the list and threw the pieces into the fire.

"And mind you, too," said East, "don't let me catch you again sneaking about the School-house, and picking up our fags. You haven't got the sort of hide to take a sound licking kindly;" and he opened the door and sent the young gentleman flying into the quadrangle with a parting kick.

"Nice boy, Tommy," said East, shoving his hands in his pockets, and strolling to the fire.

"Worst sort we breed," responded Tom, following his example. "Thank goodness, no big fellow ever took to petting me."

"You'd never have been like that," said East. "I should like to have put him in a museum: Christian young gentleman, nineteenth century, highly educated. Stir him up with a long pole, Jack, and hear him swear like a drunken sailor! He'd make a respectable public open its eyes, I think."

"Think he'll tell Jones?" said Tom.

"No," said East. "Don't care if he does."

"Nor I," said Tom. And they went back to talk about Arthur.

The young gentleman had brains enough not to tell Jones, reasoning that East and Brown, who were noticed as some of the toughest fags in the school, wouldn't care three straws for any licking Jones might give them, and would be likely to keep their words about passing it on with interest.

After the above conversation, East came a good deal to their study, and took notice of Arthur; and soon allowed to Tom that he was a thorough little gentleman, and would get over his shyness all in good time, which much comforted our hero. He felt every day, too, the value of having an object in his life, something that drew him out of himself; and, it being the dull time of the year, and no games going about for which he much cared, was happier than he had ever yet been at school, which was saying a great deal.

The time which Tom allowed himself away from his charge was from locking-up till supper time. During this hour, or hour and a half, he used to make his fling, going round to the studies of all his acquaintance, sparring or gossiping in the hall, now jumping the old iron-bound tables, or carving a bit of his name on them, then joining in some chorus of merry voices, in fact, blowing off his steam, as we should now call it.

This process was so congenial to his temper, and Arthur showed himself so pleased at the arrangement, that it was several weeks before Tom was ever in their study before supper. One evening, however, he rushed in to look for an old chisel, or some corks, or other articles essential to his pursuit for the time being, and, while rummaging about in the cupboards, looked up for a moment, and was caught at once by the figure of poor little Arthur. The boy was sitting with his elbows on the table, and his head leaning on his hands, and before him an open book, on which his tears were falling fast. Tom shut the door at once and sat down on the sofa by Arthur, putting his arm round his neck.

"Why, young un! what's the matter?" said he, kindly: "you ain't unhappy, are you?"

"Oh no, Brown," said the little boy, looking up with the great tears in his eyes; "you are so kind to me, I'm very happy."

"Why don't you call me Tom? lots of boys do that I don't like half so much as you. What are you reading, then? Hang it, you must come about with me, and not mope yourself," and Tom cast his eyes on the book, and saw it was the Bible. He was silent for a minute, and thought to himself, "Lesson Number 2, Tom Brown," and then said gently—

"I'm very glad to see this, Arthur, and ashamed that I don't read the Bible more myself. Do you read it every night before supper when I'm out?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'd wish you'd wait till afterwards, and then we'd read together. But, Arthur, why does it make you cry?"

"Oh, it isn't that I'm unhappy. But at home, while my father was alive, we always read the lessons after tea; and I love to read them over now, and try to remember what he said about them. I can't remember all, and I think I scarcely understand a great deal of what I do remember. But it all comes back to me so fresh, that I can't help crying sometimes to think that I shall never read them again with him."

Arthur had never spoken of his home before, and Tom hadn't encouraged him to do so, as his blundering school-boy reasoning made him think that Arthur would be softened and less manly for thinking of home. But now he was

fairly interested, and forgot all about chisels and bottled beer; while with very little encouragement Arthur launched into his home history, and the prayer-book put them both out sadly when it rang to call them to the hall.

From this time Arthur constantly spoke of his home, and, above all, of his father, who had been dead about a year, and whose memory Tom soon got to love and reverence almost as much as his own son did.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ARTHUR MAKES A FRIEND.

About six weeks after the beginning of the half, as Tom and Arthur were sitting one night before supper beginning their verses, Arthur suddenly stopped, and looked up, and said, "Tom, do you know anything of Martin?"

"Yes," said Tom, taking his hand out of his back hair, and delighted to throw his Gradus ad Parnassum on to the sofa; "I know him pretty well. He's a very good fellow, but as mad as a hatter. He's called Madman, you know. And never was such a fellow for getting all sorts of rum things about him. He tamed two snakes last half, and used to carry them about in his pocket, and I'll be bound he's got some hedgehogs and rats in his cupboard now, and no one knows what besides."

"I should like very much to know him," said Arthur: "he was next to me in the form to-day, and he'd lost his book and looked over mine, and he seemed so kind and gentle that I liked him very much."

"Ah, poor old Madman, he's always losing his books," said Tom, "and getting called up and flogged because he hasn't got them."

"I like him all the better," said Arthur.

"Well, he's great fun, I can tell you," said Tom, throwing himself back on the sofa, and chuckling at the remembrance. "We had such a game with him one day last half. He had been kicking up horrid stinks for some time in his study, till I suppose some fellow told Mary, and she told the Doctor. Anyhow, one day a little before dinner, when he came down from the library, the Doctor, instead of going home, came striding into the Hall. East and I and five or six other fellows were at the fire, and precisely we stared, for he don't come in like that once a year, unless it is a wet day and there's a fight in the Hall. 'East,' says he, 'just come and show me Martin's study.' 'Oh, here's a game,' whispered the rest of us, and we all cut up stairs after the Doctor, East leading. As we got into the New Row, which was hardly wide enough to hold the Doctor and his gown, click, click, click, we heard in the old Madman's den. Then that stopped all of a sudden, and the bolts went to like fun; the Madman knew East's step, and thought there was going to be a fight."

"It's the Doctor, Martin. He's here and wants to see you," sings out East.

"Then the bolts went back slowly, and the door opened, and there was the old Madman standing, looking precious scared; his jacket off, his shirt-sleeves up to his elbows, and his long skinny arms all covered with anchors and arrows and letters, tattooed in with gunpowder like a sailor-boy's, and a stink fit to knock you down coming out. 'Twas all the Doctor could do to stand his ground, and East and I, who were looking in under his arms, held our noses tight. The old magpie was standing on the window-sill, all his feathers drooping, and looking disgusted and half-poisoned."

"What can you be about, Martin?" says the Doctor; "you really mustn't go on in this way—you're a nuisance to the whole passage."

"Please, sir, I was only looking up the powder, there isn't any harm in it," and the Madman seized nervously on his pocket and, to show the Doctor the harmlessness of his pursuits, and went on powdering; click, click, click. He hadn't given six clicks before, puff! up went the whole into a great haze, away went the pocket and mortar across the study, and back went the door into the passage.

The magpie fluttered down into the corner sweating, and the Madman dashed out, howling, with his fingers in his mouth. The Doctor, not a word of him, and turned to us to look a little wiser. "There, you may follow," said he, quite pleased, though, to find he wasn't mad himself; "you see you don't know the least what you're doing with all these things; and now, mind you, you must give up practising chemistry by yourself." Then he took hold of his arm and looked at it, and I saw he had to bite his lip, and his eyes twinkled; but he said, quite grave, "Here, you see, you've been making all these foolish marks on yourself, when you never can get out, and you'll be very sorry for it in a year or two; now come down to the housekeeper's room, and let us see if you are hurt." And away went the two, and we all started and a regular turn-out of the den, till Martin came back with his hand bandaged and turned out. However, I'll go and see what he's after, and let him to come in after prayers to supper." And away went Tom to find the boy in question, who dwelt in a little study by himself in New Row.

The aforesaid Martin whom Arthur had taken such a fancy for was one of those underlings who were at that time of day (and are, I fear, still) quite out of their places at a public school. If we knew how to use our boys, Martin would have been seized upon and educated as a natural philosopher. He had a passion for birds, beasts,

and insects, and knew more of them and their habits, than any one in Rugby, except perhaps the Doctor, who knew everything. He was also an experimental chemist on a small scale, and had made unto himself an electric machine, from which it was his greatest pleasure and glory to administer small shocks to any small boys who were rash enough to venture into his study. And this was by no means an adventure free from excitement; for, besides the probability of a snake dropping on to your head or twining lovingly up your leg, or a rat getting into your breeches-pocket in search of food, there was the animal and chemical odor to be faced, which always hung about the den, and the chance of being blown up in some of the many experiments which Martin was always trying, with the most wonderful results in the shape of explosions and smells that mortal boy ever heard of. Of course, poor Martin, in consequence of his pursuits, had become an Ishmaelite in the house. In the first place, he had half-poisoned all his neighbors, and they in turn were always on the lookout to pounce upon any of his numerous live-stock, and drive him frantic by enticing his pet old magpie out of his window into a neighboring study, and making the disreputable old bird drunk on toast soaked in beer and sugar.

Then Martin, for his sins, inhabited a study looking into a small court some ten feet across, the window of which was completely commanded by those of the studies opposite in the sick-room row; these latter being at a slightly higher elevation. East, and another boy of an equally tormenting and ingenious turn of mind, now lived exactly opposite, and had expended huge pains and time in the preparation of instruments of annoyance for the behoof of Martin and his live colony. One morning an old basket made its appearance, suspended by a short cord, outside Martin's window, in which were deposited an amateur nest containing four young hungry jackdaws, the pride and glory of Martin's life for the time being, and which he was currently asserted to have hatched upon his own person. Early in the morning and late at night he was to be seen half out of the window, administering to the varied wants of his calow brood. After deep cogitation, East and his chum had spliced a knife on to the end of a fishing-rod; and having watched Martin out, had, after half an hour's severe sawing, cut the string by which the basket was suspended, and tumbled it on to the pavement below, with hideous remonstrance from the occupants. Poor Martin, returning from his short absence, collected the fragments and replaced his brood (except one whose neck had been broken in the descent) in their old location, suspending them this time by a string and wire twisted together, defiant of any sharp instrument which his persecutors could command. But, had the Russian engineers at Sebastopol, East and his chum had an answer for every move of the adversary; and the next day had mounted a gun in the shape of a pea-shooter upon the ledge of their window, trained so as to bear exactly upon the spot which Martin had to occupy while tending his nurslings. The moment he began to feed, they began to shoot; in vain did the enemy himself invest in a pea-shooter, and endeavor to answer the fire while he fed the young birds with his other hand; his attention was divided, and his shots flew wild, while every one of theirs told on his face and hands, and drove him into howlings and imprecations. He had been driven to ensconce the nest in a corner of his already too well-filled den.

His den was barricaded by a set of ingenious boxes of his own invention, for the stacks were frequent by the limitations when any unusually and most often spread from the den to the neighboring studies. The door-panels were in a normal state of smash, but the frame of the door resisted all besiegers, and behind it the owner estranged on his varied pursuits; much in the same state of mind, I should fancy, as a border runner lived in, in the days of the old miss-trappers, when his soul might be summoned or his cattle carried off at any minute of the night or day.

"Okey, Martin, old boy—it's only I, Tom Brown."

"Oh, very well, stop a moment." One bolt went back. "You're sure East isn't there?"

"No, no, hang it, open." Tom gave a kick, the other bolt creaked, and he entered the den.

Den indeed it was, about five feet six inches long by five wide, and seven feet high. About six tattered school books, and a few chemical books, Taxidermy, Snakes, and Birds, and an odd volume of Henshaw, the latter in much better preservation, occupied the top shelves. The other shelves, where they had not been cut away and used by the owner for other purposes, were fitted up for the accommodation of birds, beasts, and reptiles. There was no attempt at carpet or curtain. The floor was entirely occupied by the great work of Martin, the electric machine, which was covered carefully with the remains of his tin-plate. The back wall was occupied one way, and the other was adorned by a small hatchet, a pair of chisels, and his tin candle-box, in which he was for the time being endeavoring to raise a hopeful young family of tin-dunces. As nothing should be let to be useless, it was well that the candle-box was thus occupied, for candles Martin never had. A board was issued to him weekly as to the other boys, but as candles



"Oh, come on, don't let us miss," said A. J., who was getting excited at this point of the game; so they broke into a third round, and the score was 1-0 in the third, and the boys, who had been very happy to play, lost interest in the game, and were not able to keep their heads down and not to look at



and stopped at the foot of a tall fir, at the top of which Martin pointed out with pride the kestrel's nest, the object of their quest.

"Oh where! which is it?" asks Arthur, gapping up in the air, and having the most vague idea of what it would be like.

"There, don't you see!" said East, pointing to a lump of mistletoe in the next tree, which was a beech: he saw that Martin and Tom were busy with the climbing-irons, and couldn't resist the temptation of hoaxing. Arthur stared and wondered more than ever.

"Well, how curious! it doesn't look a bit like what I expected," said he.

"Very odd birds, kestrels," said East, looking waggishly at his victim, who was still staring.

"But I thought it was in a fir-tree!" objected Arthur.

"Ah, don't you know! that's a new sort of fir which old Caldecott brought from the Himalayas."

"Really!" said Arthur; "I'm glad I know that—how unlike our firs they are! They do very well too here, don't they? the spinney's full of them."

"What's that humbug he's telling you?" cried Tom, looking up, having caught the word Himalayas, and suspecting what East was after.

"Only about this fir," said Arthur, putting his hand on the stem of the beech.

"Fir!" shouted Tom; "why, you don't mean to say, young un, you don't know a beech when you see one?"

Poor little Arthur looked terribly ashamed, and East exploded in laughter which made the wood ring.

"I've hardly ever seen any trees," faltered Arthur.

"What a shame to hoax him, Scud!" cried Martin. "Never mind, Arthur, you shall know more about trees than he does in a week or two."

"And isn't that the kestrel's nest, then?" asked Arthur.

"That! why, that's a piece of mistletoe. There's the nest, that lump of sticks up this fir."

"Don't believe him, Arthur," struck in the incorrigible East; "I just saw an old magpie go out of it."

Martin did not deign to reply to this sally, except by a grunt, as he buckled the last buckle of his climbing-irons; and Arthur looked reproachfully at East without speaking.

But now came the tug of war. It was a very difficult tree to climb until the branches were reached, the first of which was some fourteen feet up, for the trunk was too large at the bottom to be swarmed; in fact neither of the boys could reach more than half round it with their arms. Martin and Tom, both of whom had irons on, tried it without success at first; the fir bark broke away where they stuck the irons in as soon as they leaned any weight on their feet, and the grip of their arms wasn't enough to keep them up; so, after getting up three or four feet, down they came slithering to the ground, barking their arms and faces. They were furious, and East sat by laughing and shouting at each failure, "Two to one on the old magpie!"

"We must try a pyramid," said Tom at last. "Now, Scud, you lazy rascal, stick yourself against the tree!"

"I dare say! and have you standing on my shoulders with the irons on; what do you think my skin's made of?" However, up he got and leaned against the tree, putting his head down and clasping it with his arms as far as he could. "Now, then, Madman," said Tom, "you next."

"No, I'm lighter than you; you go next." So Tom got on East's shoulders and grasped the tree above, and then Martin scrambled up on to Tom's shoulders, amidst the tottering and groanings of the pyramid, and with a spring which sent his supporters howling to the ground, clasped the stem some ten feet up, and remained clinging. For a moment or two they thought he couldn't get up, but then holding on with arms and teeth, he worked first one iron then the other firmly into the bark, got another grip with his arms and in another minute had hold of the lowest branch.

"All up with the old magpie now," said East; and after a minute's rest, up went Martin, hand over hand, watched by Arthur, with fearful eagerness.

"Isn't it very dangerous?" said he.

"Not a bit," answered Tom; "you can't hurt, if you only get good hand hold. Try every branch with a good pull before you trust it, and then up you go."

Martin was now amongst the small branches close to the nest, and away dashed the old bird and soared up above the trees, watching the intruder.

"All right—four eggs!" shouted he.

"Take 'em all!" shouted East; "that'll be one piece."

"No, no! leave one and then she won't care," said Tom.

We boys had an idea that birds couldn't count, and were quite content as long as you left one egg. I hope it is so.

Martin carefully put one egg into each of his pockets, and the third into his mouth, the only place of safety, and came down like a lamp-glass. All went well till he was within ten feet of the ground, when, as the trunk enlarged, his hold got less and less firm, and at last down he

came with a run, tumbling on to his back on the turf, spluttering and spitting out the remains of the great egg, which had broken by the jar of the fall.

"Ugh, ugh! something to drink—ugh! it was addled," spluttered he, while the woods rang again with the merry laughter of East and Tom.

Then they examined the prizes, gathered up their things and went off to the brook, where Martin swallowed huge draughts of water to get rid of the taste; and they visited the sedgebird's nest, and from thence struck across the country in high glee, beating the hedges and brakes as they went along; and Arthur at last, to his intense delight, was allowed to climb a small hedgerow oak for a magpie's nest with Tom, who kept all around him like a mother, and showed him where to hold and how to throw his weight; and though he was in a great fright, didn't show it, and was applauded by all for his lissomeness.

They crossed a road soon afterwards, and there, close to them, lay a heap of charming pebbles.

"Look here," shouted East, "here's luck! I've been longing for some good honest pecking this half hour. Let's fill the bags, and have no more of this fooling bird's-nesting."

No one objected, so each boy filled the fustian bag he carried full of stones—they crossed into the next field, Tom and East taking one side of the hedges, and the other two the other side. Noise enough they made certainly, but it was too early in the season for the young birds, and the old birds were too strong on the wing for our young marksmen, and flew out of shot after the first discharge. But it was great fun, rushing along the hedgerows, and discharging stone after stone at blackbirds and chaffinches, though no result in the shape of slaughtered birds was obtained; and Arthur soon entered into it, and rushed to head back the birds, and shouted, and threw, and tumbled into ditches and over through hedges, as wild as the Madman himself.

Presently the party, in full cry after an old blackbird (who was evidently used to the thing and enjoyed the fun, for he would wait till they came close to him and then fly on for forty yards or so, and with an impudent flicker of his tail, dart into the depths of the quickset), came beating down a high double hedge, two on each side.

"There he is again," "Head him!" "Let drive!" "I had him there!" "Take care where you're throwing, Madman!" the shouts might have been heard a quarter of a mile off. They were heard some two hundred yards off by a farmer and two of his shepherds, who were doctoring sheep in the next field.

Now the farmer in question rented a house and yard situated at the end of the field in which the young bird-fanciers had arrived, which house and yard he didn't occupy or keep any one else in. Nevertheless, like a brainless and unreasoning Briton, he persisted in maintaining on the premises a large stock of cocks, hens, and other poultry. Of course all sorts of depredators visited the place from time to time; foxes and gypsies wrought havoc in the night time; while in the day-time, I regret to have to confess that visits from the Rugby boys, and consequent disappearances of ancient and respectable fowls, were not unfrequent. Tom and East had during the period of their outlawry visited the barn in question for felonious purposes, and on one occasion had conquered and slain a duck there, and borne away the carcass triumphantly, hidden in their handkerchiefs. However, they were sickened of the practice by the trouble and anxiety which the wretched duck's body caused them. They carried it to Sally Harrowell's, in hopes of a good supper; but she, after examining it, made a long face, and refused to dress or have any thing to do with it. Then they took it to their study, and began plucking it themselves; but what to do with feathers, where to hide them!

"Good gracious, Tom, what a lot of feathers a duck has!" groaned East, holding a bag full in his hand, and looking disconsolately at the carcass, not yet half plucked.

"And I do think he's getting high, too, already," said Tom, smelling at him cautiously, "so we must finish him up soon."

"Yes, all very well, but how are we to cook him? I'm sure I ain't going to try it on in the hall or passages; we can't afford to be roasting ducks about, our character is too bad."

"I wish we were rid of the brute," said Tom, throwing him on the table in disgust. And after a day or two more it became clear that got rid of he must be; so they packed him and sealed him up in brown paper, and put him in the cupboard of an unoccupied study, where he was found in the holidays by the matron, a grewsome body.

They had never been duck-hunting there since, but others had, and the bold yeoman was very sore on the subject, and bent on making an example of the first boys he could catch. So he and his shepherds crouched behind the hurdles, and watched the party who were approaching all unconscious.

Why should that old guinea-fowl be lying out in the large list at this particular moment of all the year? Who can say! Guinea-fowls always are—so are all other things, animals, and persons—requisite for getting one into scrapes, always ready when any mischief can come of them. At any rate, just under East's nose popped out the old guinea-fowl, scuttling along and shrieking "Come back, come back," at the top of her voice. Either of the other three might perhaps have

withstood the temptation, but East first lets drive the stone he has in his hand at her, and then rushes to turn her into the hedge again. He succeeds, and then they are all at it for dear life, up and down the hedge in full cry, the "Come back, come back," getting shriller and fainter every minute.

Meantime, the farmer and his men steal over the hurdles and creep down the hedge towards the scene of action. They are almost within a stone's throw of Martin, who is pressing the unlucky chase hard, when Tom catches sight of them, and sings out, "Louts, ware louts, your side! Madman, look ahead!" and then catching hold of Arthur, hurries him away across the fields towards Rugby as hard as they can tear. Had he been by himself, he would have staid to see it out with the others, but now his heart sinks, and all his pluck goes. The idea of being led up to the Doctor with Arthur for bagging fowls, quite unmans and takes half the run out of him.

However, no boys are more able to take care of themselves than East and Martin; they dodge the pursuers, slip through a gap, and come pelting after Tom and Arthur, whom they catch up in no time; the farmer and his men are making good running about a field behind. Tom wishes to himself that they had made off in any other direction, but now they are all in for it together, and must see it out. "You won't leave the young un, will you?" says he, as they haul poor little Arthur, already losing wind from the fright, through the next hedge. "Not we," is the answer from both. The next hedge is a stiff one; the pursuers gained horribly on them, and they only just pull Arthur through, with two great rents in his trousers, as the foremost shepherd comes up on the other side. As they start into the next field, they are aware of two figures walking down the footpath in the middle of it, and recognize Holmes and Diggs taking a constitutional. Those good-natured fellows immediately shout "On." "Let's go to them and surrender," pants Tom.—Agreed.—And in another minute the four boys, to the great astonishment of those worthies, rush breathless up to Holmes and Diggs, who pull up to see what is the matter; and then the whole is explained by the appearance of the farmer and his men, who unite their forces and bear down on the knot of boys.

There is no time to explain, and Tom's heart beats frightfully quick, as he ponders, "Will they stand by us?"

The farmer makes a rush at East and collars him; and that young gentleman, with unusual discretion, instead of kicking his shins, looks appealingly at Holmes, and stands still.

"Hullo there, not so fast," says Holmes, who is bound to stand up for them till they are proved in the wrong. "Now what's all this about?"

"I've got the young varmit at last, have I," pants the farmer; "why, they've been a skulking about my yard and stealing my fowls, that's where 'tis; and if I don't have they flogged for it, every one on 'em, my name ain't Thompson."

Holmes looks grave, and Diggs' face falls. They are quite ready to fight, no boys in the school more so; but they are prepostors, and understand their office, and can't uphold unrighteous causes.

"I haven't been near his old barn this half," cries East. "Nor I," "Nor I," chime in Tom and Martin.

"Now, Willum, didn't you see 'em there last week?"

"Ees, I seen 'em sure enough," says Willum, grasping a prod he carried, and preparing for action.

The boys deny stoutly, and Willum is driven to admit that, "If it worn't they 'twas chaps as like 'em as two peas 'n;" and "leastways he'd swear he seed 'em two in the yard last Martinmas," indicating East and Tom.

Holmes has had time to meditate. "Now, sir," says he to Willum, "you see you can't remember what you have seen, and I believe the boys."

"I don't care," blusters the farmer; "they was arter my fowls to-day, that's enough for I. Willum, you catch hold of 'em other chap. They've been a sneaking about this two hours, I tells ee," shouted he, as Holmes stands between Martin and Willum, "and have druv a matter of a dozen young pullets pretty nigh to death."

"Oh, there's a whacker!" cried East; "we haven't been within a hundred yards of his barn; we haven't been up here above ten minutes, and we've seen nothing but a tough old guinea-hen, who ran like a greyhound."

"Indeed, that's all true, Holmes, upon my honor," added Tom; "we weren't after his fowls; guinea-hen ran out of the hedge under our feet, and we've seen nothing else."

"Drat that talk! Thee catch hold o' 'em other, Willum, and come along wi' 'un."

"Farmer Thompson," said Holmes, warning off Willum and the prong with his stick, while Diggs faced the other shepherd, cracking his fingers like pistol-shots, "now listen to reason—the boys haven't been after your fowls, that's plain."

"I seen 'em I seed 'em. Who be you, I should like to know?"

"Never you mind, Farmer," answered Holmes. "As I now I'm just to tell you what it is—you ought to be ashamed of yourself for leaving all that poultry about, with no one to watch it, so near the school. You deserve to have it all stolen. So if you choose to come up to the Doctor with them



I shall go with you, and tell him what I think of it."

The farmer began to take Holmes for a master; besides, he wanted to get back to his flock. Corporal punishment was out of the question, the odds were too great; so he began to hint at paying for the damage. Arthur jumped at this, offering to pay any thing, and the farmer immediately valued the guinea-hen at half a sovereign.

"Half a sovereign!" cried East, now released from the farmer's grip; "well, that is a good one! the old hen ain't hurt a bit, and she's seven years old, I know, and as tough as whipcord; she couldn't lay another egg to save her life."

It was at last settled that they should pay the farmer two shillings, and his man one shilling, and so the matter ended, to the unspeakable relief of Tom, who hadn't been able to say a word, being sick at heart at the idea of what the Doctor would think of him; and now the whole party of boys marched off down the footpath towards Rugby. Holmes, who was one of the best boys in the school, began to improve the occasion. "Now, you youngsters," said he, as he marched along in the middle of them, "mind this; you're very well out of this scrape. Don't you go near Thompson's barn again, do you hear!"

Profuse promises from all, especially East.

"Mind, I don't ask questions," went on Mentor, "but I rather think some of you have been there before this after his chickens. Now, knocking over other people's chickens, and running off with them, is stealing. It's a nasty word, but that's the plain English of it. If the chickens were dead and lying in a shop, you wouldn't take them, I know that, any more than you would apples out of Griffith's basket; but there's no real difference between chickens running about and apples on a tree, and the same articles in a shop. I wish our morals were sounder in such matters. There's nothing so mischievous as these school distinctions, which jumble up right and wrong and justify things in us for which poor boys would be sent to prison." And good old Holmes delivered his soul on the walk home of many wise sayings, and, as the song says, "Gee'd 'em a sight of good advice;" which same sermon sank into them all more or less, and very penitent they were for several hours. But truth compels me to admit that East at any rate forgot it all in a week, but remembered the insult which had been put upon him by Farmer Thompson, and, with Tadpole and other bare-brained youngsters, committed a raid on the barn soon afterwards, in which they were caught by the shepherds and severely handled, besides having to pay eight shillings—all the money they had in the world—to escape being taken up to the Doctor.

Martin became a constant inmate in the joint study from this time, and Arthur took to him so kindly that Tom couldn't resist slight fits of jealousy, which however he managed to keep to himself. The kestrel's eggs had not been broken, strange to say, and formed the nucleus of Arthur's collection, at which Martin worked heart and soul; and introduced Arthur to Howlett the bird-fancier, and instructed him in the rudiments of the art of stuffing. In token of his gratitude, Arthur allowed Martin to tattoo a small anchor on one of his wrists, which decoration, however, he carefully concealed from Tom. Before the end of the half-year he had trained into a bold climber and good runner, and as Martin had foretold, knew twice as much about trees, birds, flowers, and many other things, as our good-hearted and facetious young friend Harry East.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIGHT.

There is a certain sort of fellow—we who are used to studying boys all know him well enough—of whom you can predicate with almost positive certainty, after he has been a month at school, that he is sure to have a fight, and with almost equal certainty that he will have but one. Tom Brown was one of these; and as it is our well-weighed intention to give a full, true, and correct account of Tom's only single combat with a school-fellow in the manner of our old friend *Bell's Life*, let those young persons whose stomachs are not strong, or who think a good set-to with the weapons which God has given us all, an uncivilized, unchristian, or ungentlemanly affair, skip this chapter at once, for it won't be to their taste.

It was not at all usual in those days for two School-house boys to have a fight. Of course there were exceptions, when some cross-grained, hard-headed fellow came up who would never be happy unless he was quarreling with his nearest neighbors, or when there was some class dispute between the fifth form and the fags, for instance, which required blood-letting; and a champion was picked out on each side tacitly, who settled the matter by a good hearty mill. But for the most part, the constant use of those surest keepers of the peace, the boxing-gloves, kept the School-house boys from fighting one another. Two or three nights in every week the gloves were brought out, either in the hall or fifth-form room; and every boy who was a member of the school knew all his neighbors' prowess perfectly well, and could tell to a nicety what chance he would have in a fight with any particular fellow. It was not, however, as regarded boys in other houses; and

as most of the other houses were more or less jealous of the School-house, collisions were frequent.

After all, what would life be without fighting. I should like to know? From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest business, of every son of man. Every one who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts and habits in himself or spiritual wickedness in high places, or Russians, or Border-ruffians, or Bill, Tom, or Harry, who will not let him live his life in quiet till he has thrashed them.

It is no good for Quakers, or any other body of men, to uplift their voices against fighting. Human nature is too strong for them, and they don't follow their own precepts. Every soul of them is doing his own piece of fighting, somehow and somewhere. The world might be a better world without fighting, for anything I know, but it wouldn't be our world; and therefore I am dead against crying peace, when there is no peace, and isn't meant to be. I am as sorry as any man to see folk fighting the wrong people and the wrong things, but I'd a deal sooner see them doing that than that they should have no fight in them. So having recorded, and being about to record, my hero's fights of all sorts, with all sorts of enemies, I shall now proceed to give an account of his passage-at-arms with the only one of his school-fellows whom he ever had to encounter in this manner.

It was drawing towards the close of Arthur's first half year, and the May evenings were lengthening out. Locking-up was not till eight o'clock, and everybody was beginning to talk about what he would do in the holidays. The shell, in which form all our *dramatis personae* now are, were reading amongst other things the last book of Homer's *Iliad*, and had worked through it as far as the speeches of the women over Hector's body. It is a whole school-day, and four or five of the School-house boys (among whom are Arthur, Tom, and East) are preparing third lesson together. They have finished the regulation forty lines, and are for the most part getting very tired, notwithstanding the exquisite pathos of Helen's lamentation. And now several long four-syllabled words come together, and the boy with the dictionary strikes work.

"I am not going to look out any more words," says he; "we've done the quantity. Ten to one we shan't get so far. Let's go out into the close."

"Come along, boys," cries East, always ready to leave "the grind," as he called it; "our old coach is laid up, you know, and we shall have one of the new masters, who's sure to go slow and let us down easy."

So an adjournment to the close was carried *nem con.*, little Arthur not daring to uplift his voice; but being deeply interested in what they were reading, staid quietly behind, and learnt on for his own pleasure.

As East had said, the regular master of the form was unwell, and they were to be heard by one of the new masters, quite a young man, who had only just left the University. Certainly it would be hard lines, if, by dawdling as much as possible in coming in and taking their places, entering into long-winded explanations of what was the usual course of the regular master of the form, and others of the stock contrivances of boys for wasting time in school, they could not spin out the lesson so that he should not work them through more than the forty lines; as to which quantity there was a perpetual fight going on between the master and his form, the latter insisting, and enforcing by passive resistance, that it was the prescribed quantity by Homer for a shell lesson, the former that there was no fixed quantity, but that they must always be ready to go on to fifty or sixty lines if there were time within the hour. However, notwithstanding all their efforts, the new master got on horribly quick; he seemed to have the bad taste to be really interested in the lesson, and to be trying to work them up into something like appreciation of it, giving them good-spirited English words, instead of the wretched bald stuff into which they rendered poor old Homer, and construing over each piece himself to them, after each boy, to show them how it should be done.

Now the clock strikes the three-quarters; there is only a quarter of an hour more, but the forty lines are all but done. So the boys, one after another, who are called up, stick more and more, and make bolder and even more bald work of it. The poor young master is pretty well beat by this time, and feels ready to knock his head against the wall, or his fingers against somebody else's head. So he gives up altogether the lower and middle parts of the form, and looks round in despair at the boys on the top bench, to see if there is one out of whom he can strike a spark or two, and who will be too chivalrous to murder the most beautiful utterances of the most beautiful woman of the old world. His eye rests on Arthur, and he calls him up to finish construing Helen's speech. Whereupon all the other boys draw long breaths, and begin to stare about and take it easy. They are sure to be able to construe, and that will tide on safely till the hour strikes.

Arthur proceeds to read out the passage in Greek before construing it, as the custom is, low, who isn't paying much attention, is sudden-

ly caught by the falter in his voice as he reads. He looks up at Arthur. "Why, bless us," thinks he, "what can be the matter with the young un? He's never going to get flogged. He's sure to have learnt to the end." Next moment he is reassured by the spirited tone in which Arthur begins construing, and betakes himself to drawing dogs' heads in his note-book, while the master, evidently enjoying the change, turns his back on the middle bench, and stands before Arthur, beating a sort of time with his hand and foot, and saying, "Yes, yea." "Very well," as Arthur goes on.

But as he nears the last fatal line, Tom catches that falter, and again looks up. He sees that there is something the matter; Arthur can hardly get on at all. What can it be?

Sudden! at this point Arthur breaks down altogether, and fairly bursts out crying, and dashes the cuff of his jacket across his eyes, blushing up to the roots of his hair, and feeling as if he should like to go down suddenly through the floor. The whole form are taken aback; most of them stare stupidly at him, while those who are gifted with presence of mind find their places, and look steadily at their books, in hopes of not catching the master's eye, and getting called up in Arthur's place.

The master looks puzzled for a moment, and then seeing, as the fact is, that the boy is really affected to tears by the most touching thing in Homer, perhaps in all profane poetry put together, steps up to him and lays his hand kindly on his shoulder, saying, "Never mind, my little man, you've construed very well. Stop a minute, there's no hurry."

Now, as luck would have it, there sat next above Tom on that day, in the middle bench of the form, a big boy, by name Williams, generally supposed to be the cock of the shell, therefore of all the school below the fifth. The small boys, who are great speculators on the prowess of their elders, used to hold forth to one another about Williams's great strength, and to discuss whether East or Brown would take a licking from him. He was called Slogger Williams, from the force with which it was supposed he could hit. In the main, he was a rough, good-natured fellow enough, but very much alive to his own dignity. He reckoned himself the king of the form, and kept up his position with the strong hand, especially in the matter of forcing boys not to construe more than the legitimate forty lines. He had already grunted and grumbled to himself, when Arthur went on reading beyond the forty lines. But now that he had broken down just in the middle of all the long words, the Slogger's wrath was fairly aroused.

"Sneaking little brute," muttered he, regardless of prudence, "clapping on the water-works just in the hardest place; see if I don't punch his head after the fourth lesson."

"Whose?" said Tom, to whom the remark seemed to be addressed.

"Why, that little sneak Arthur's," replied Williams.

"No, you shan't," said Tom.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Williams, looking at Tom with great surprise for a moment, and then giving him a sudden dig in the ribs with his elbow, which sent Tom's books flying on to the floor, and called the attention of the master, who turned suddenly round, and seeing the state of things, said—

"Williams, go down three places, and then go on."

The Slogger found his legs very slowly, and proceeded to go below Tom and two other boys with great disgust, and then, turning round and facing the master, said, "I haven't learnt any more, sir; our lesson is only forty lines."

"Is that so?" said the master, appealing generally to the top bench. No answer.

"Who is the head boy of the form?" said he, waxing wroth.

"Arthur, sir," answered three or four boys, indicating our friend.

"Oh, your name's Arthur. Well, now, what is the length of your regular lesson?"

Arthur hesitated a moment, and then said, "We call it only forty lines, sir."

"How do you mean you call it?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Graham says we ain't to stop there when there's time to construe more."

"I understand," said the master. "Williams, go down three more places, and write me out the lesson in Greek and English. And now, Arthur, finish construing."

"Oh! would I be in Arthur's shoes after fourth lesson!" said the little boys to one another; but Arthur finished Helen's speech without any further catastrophe, and the clock struck four, when ended third lesson.

Another hour was occupied in preparing and saying fourth lesson, during which Williams was boiling up his wrath; and when five struck, and the lessons for the day were over, he prepared to take summary vengeance on the innocent cause of his misfortune.

Tom was detained in school a few minutes after the rest, and on coming out into the quadrangle, the first thing he saw was a small ring of boys, applauding Williams, who was holding Arthur by the collar.

"There, you young sneak," said Williams, "I made you say that—"

"Hullo!" said Tom, shouldering Williams.



"you drop that, Williams; you shan't touch him."  
"Who'll stop me?" said the Slogger, raising his hand again.

"I," said Tom; and suiting the action to the word, he struck the arm which held Arthur's arm so sharply that the Slogger dropped it with a start, and turned the full current of his wrath on Tom.

"Will you fight?"

"Yes, of course."

"Huzzah! there's going to be a fight between Slogger Williams and Tom Brown!"

The news ran like wildfire about, and many boys who were on their way to tea at their several houses turned back, and sought the back of the chapel, where the fights come off.

"Just run and tell East to come and back me," said Tom to a small School-house boy, who was off like a rocket to Harrowell's, just stopping for a moment to poke his head into the School-house hall, where the lower boys were already at tea, and sing out, "Fight! Tom Brown and Slogger Williams."

Up start half the boys at once, leaving bread, eggs, butter, sprats, and all the rest to take care of themselves. The greater part of the remainder follow in a minute, after swallowing their tea, carrying their food in their hands to consume as they go. Three or four only remain, who steal the butter of the more impetuous, and make to themselves an unctuous feast.

In another minute East and Martin tear through the quadrangle, carrying a sponge, and arrive at the scene of action just as the combatants are beginning to strip.

Tom felt he had got his work out of him, as he stripped off his jacket, waistcoat and braces. East tied his handkerchief round his waist, and rolled up his shirt-sleeves for him: "Now, old boy, don't you open your mouth to say a word, or try to help yourself a bit—we'll do all that; you keep all your breath and strength for the Slogger." Martin meanwhile folded the clothes and put them under the chapel rails; and now Tom, with East to handle him, and Martin to give him a knee, steps out on the turf, and is ready for all that may come; and here is the Slogger too, all stripped, and thirsting for the fray.

It doesn't look a fair match at first glance: Williams is nearly two inches taller, and probably a long year older than his opponent, and he is very strongly made about the arms and shoulders—"peels well," as the little knot of big fifth-form boys, the amateurs say; who stand outside the ring of little boys, looking complacently on, but taking no active part in the proceedings. But down below he is not so good by any means; no spring from the loins, and feebleish, not to say shipwreck about the knees. Tom, on the contrary, though not half so strong in the arms, is good all over, straight, hard, and springy, from neck to ankle, better perhaps in his legs than anywhere. Besides, you can see by the clear white of his eye, and fresh bright look of his skin, that he is in tip-top training, able to do all he knows; while the Slogger looks rather sodden, as if he didn't take much exercise and ate too much tuck. The time-keeper is chosen, a large ring made, and the two stand up opposite one another for a moment, giving us time just to make our little observations.

"If Tom'll only condescend to fight with his head and heels," as East mutters to Martin, "we shall do."

But seemingly he won't, for there he goes in, making play with both hands. Hard all, is the word; the two stand to one another like men; ready fellows rally in quick succession, each fighting as if he thought to finish the whole thing out of hand. "Can't last at this rate," say the knowing ones, while the partisans of each make the air ring with their shouts and counter-shouts of encouragement, approval, and defiance.

"Take it easy, take it easy—keep away, let him come after you," implores East, as he wipes Tom's face after the first round with a wet sponge, while he sits back on Martin's knee, supported by the Madman's long arms, which tremble a little from excitement.

"Time's up," calls the time-keeper.

"There he goes again, hang it all!" growls East, as his man is at it again, as hard as ever. A very second round follows, in which Tom gets out and at the worst of it, and is at last hit clean off his legs, and deposited on the grass by a right-hander from the Slogger.

Loud shouts rise from the boys of Slogger's party, and the School-house are silent and vicious, ready to pick quarrels anywhere.

"Two to one in half-crowns on the big up," says Rattle, one of the amateurs, a tall fellow, in thunder-and-lightning waistcoat, and puffy, good-looking fellow.

"Done!" says Groove, another amateur of quieter look, taking out his note-book to enter it, for our friend Rattle sometimes forgets these little things.

Now the East is freshened up Tom with the sponge, and has set two other boys to back him.

"I don't like it," whispers he, "this may be fun for you, but it's death to me. He'll hit all the fight out of me in another five minutes, and then I shall be as good as dead myself in the island ditch. I shall draw him about; he'll draw me about; and you can go in and see the result. Well, that's the care of the Slogger's party."

Tom felt the wisdom of the counsel, and saw already that he couldn't go in and finish the Slogger off at mere hammer and tongs, so changed his tactics completely in the third round. He now fights cautiously, getting away from and parrying the Slogger's lunging hits, instead of trying to counter, and leading his enemy a dance all round the ring after him. "He's funking—go in Williams," "Catch him up," "Finish him off," scream the small boys of the Slogger party.

"Just what we want," thinks East, chuckling to himself, as he sees Williams, excited by these shouts, and thinking the game in his own hands, blowing himself in his exertions to get to close quarters again, while Tom is keeping away with perfect ease.

They quarter over the ground again and again, Tom always on the defensive.

The Slogger pulls up at last for a moment, fairly blown.

"Now then, Tom," sings out East, dancing with delight. Tom goes in in a twinkling, and hits two heavy body-blows, and gets away again before the Slogger can catch his wind; which when he does he rushes with blind fury at Tom, and being skillfully parried and avoided, overreaches himself and falls on his face, amidst terrific cheers from the School-house boys.

"Double your two to one!" says Groove to Rattle, note book in hand.

"Stop a bit," says that hero, looking uncomfortably at Williams, who is putting away on his second's knee, winded enough, but little the worse in any other way.

After another round the Slogger too seems to see that he can't go in and win right off, and has met his match or thereabouts. So he too begins to use his head, and tries to make Tom lose his patience, and come in before his time. And so the fight aways on, and now one, then the other getting a trifling pull.

Tom's face begins to look very one-sided—there are little queer bumps on his forehead, and his mouth is bleeding; but East keeps the wet sponge going so scientifically that he comes up looking as fresh and bright as ever. Williams is only slightly marked in the face, but by the nervous movement of his elbows you can see that Tom's body-blows are telling. In fact, half the vice of the Slogger's hitting is neutralized, for he daren't lunge out freely for fear of exposing his sides. It is too interesting by this time for much shouting, and the whole ring is very quiet.

"All right, Tommy," whispers East; "hold on's the horse that's to win. We've got the last. Keep your head, old boy."

But where is Arthur all this time? Words cannot paint the poor little fellow's distress. He couldn't muster courage to come up to the ring, but wandered up and down from the great fives-court to the corner of the chapel rails—now trying to make up his mind to throw himself between them, and try to stop them; then thinking of running in and telling his friend Mary, who he knew would instantly report to the Doctor. The stories he had heard of men being killed in prize-fights rose up horribly before him.

Once only, when the shouts of "Well done, Brown!" "Huzzah for the School-house!" rose higher than ever, he ventured up to the ring, thinking the victory was won. Catching sight of Tom's face in the state I have described, all fear of consequences vanishing out of his mind, he rushed straight off to the matron's room, beseeching her to get the fight stopped, or he should die.

But it's time for us to get back to the close. What is this fierce tumult and confusion? The ring is broken, and high and angry words are being handled about; "It's all fair"—"It isn't"—"No hugging;" the fight is stopped. The combatants, however, sit there quietly, tended by their seconds, while their adherents wrangle in the middle. East can't help shouting challenges to two or three on the other side, though he never leaves Tom for a moment, and pries the sponges as fast as ever.

The fact is, that at the end of the last round, Tom, seeing a good opening, had closed with his opponent, and after a moment's struggle had thrown him heavily, by help of the fall he had learnt from his village rival in the vale of White Horse. Williams hadn't the ghost of a chance with Tom at wrestling; and the conviction broke at once on the Slogger faction that if this were allowed, their man must be licked. There was a strong feeling in the school against catching hold and throwing, though it was generally ruled all fair within certain limits; so the ring was broken, and the fight stopped.

The School-house are overruled—the fight is on again, but there is to be no throwing; and East in high wrath threatens to take his man away after next round (which he don't mean to do, by-the-way), when suddenly Young Brooke comes through the small gate at the end of the chapel. The School-house faction rush to him.

"Oh, hurrah! now we shall get fair play."

"Please, Brooke, come up; they won't let Tom Brown throw him."

"Throw whom?" says Brooke, coming up to the ring. "Oh! Williams, I see. Nonsense! of course he may throw him if he catches him fairly above the waist."

Now, young Brooke, you're in the sixth, you know, and you ought to stop all fights. He looks hard at both boys. "Any thing wrong?" says he to East, nodding at Tom.

"Not a bit."

"Not beat at all?"

"Bless you, no! heaps of fight in him. Ah! there, Tom?"

Tom looks at Brooke, and grins.

"How's he?" nodding at Williams.

"So so; rather done, I think, since his last fall. He won't stand above two more."

"Time's up!" the boys rise again, and face one another. Brooke can't find it in his heart to stop them just yet, so the round goes on, the Slogger waiting for Tom, and reserving all his strength to hit him out should he come in for the wrestling dodge again, for he feels that that must be stopped, or his sponge will soon go up in the air.

And now another new-comer appears on the field, to wit, the under-porter, with his long brush and great wooden receptacle for dust under his arm. He has been sweeping out the schools.

"You'd better stop, gentlemen," he says; "the Doctor knows that Brown's fighting—he'll be out in a minute."

"You go to Bath, Bill," is all that that excellent servitor gets by his advice. And being a man of his hands, and a staunch upholder of the School-house, can't help stopping to look on for a bit, and see Tom Brown, their pet craftsman, fight a round.

It is grim earnest now, and no mistake. Both boys feel this, and summon every power of head, hand, and eye to their aid. A piece of luck on either side, a foot slipping, a blow getting well home, or another fall, may decide it. Tom works slowly round for an opening; he has all the legs, and can choose his own time: the Slogger waits for the attack, and hopes to finish it by some heavy right-handed blow. As they quarter slowly over the ground, the evening sun comes out from behind a cloud, and falls full on Williams' face. Tom darts in, the heavy right-hand is delivered, but only grazes his head. A short rally at close quarters, and they close; in another moment the Slogger is thrown again heavily for the third time.

"I'll give you three to two on the little one in half-crowns," said Groove to Rattle.

"No, thank'ee," answers the other, diving his hands farther into his coat-tails.

Just at this stage of the proceedings the door of the turret which leads to the Doctor's library suddenly opens, and he steps into the close, and makes straight for the ring, in which Brown and the Slogger are both seated on their seconds' knees for the last time.

"The Doctor! the Doctor!" shouts some small boy who catches sight of him, and the ring melts away in a few seconds, the small boys tearing off, Tom collaring his jacket and waistcoat, and slipping through the little gate by the chapel, and round the corner to Harrowell's with his backers, as lively as need be; Williams and his backers making off not quite so fast across the close; Groove, Rattle, and the other bigger fellows trying to combine dignity and prudence in a comical manner, and walking off fast enough, they hope, not to be recognized, and not fast enough to look like running away.

Young Brooke alone remains on the ground by the time the Doctor gets there, and touches his hat, not without a slight inward quaku.

"Hah! Brooke, I am surprised to see you here. Don't you know that I expect the sixth to stop fighting?"

Brooke felt much more uncomfortable than he had expected, but he was rather a favorite with the Doctor for his openness and plainness of speech; so blurted out, as he walked by the Doctor's side, who had already turned back—

"Yes, sir, generally. But I thought you wished us to exercise a discretion in the matter, too—not to interfere too soon."

"But they have been fighting this half-hour and more," said the Doctor.

"Yes, sir; but neither was hurt. And they're the sort of boys who'll be all the better friends now, which they wouldn't have been if they had been stopped any earlier—before it was so equal."

"Who was fighting with Brown?" said the Doctor.

"Williams, sir, of Thompson's. He is bigger than Brown, and had the best of it at first, but not when you come up, sir. There's a good deal of jealousy between our house and Thompson's, and there would have been more fights if this hadn't been let go on, or if either of them had had much the worst of it."

"Well but, Brooke," said the Doctor, "doesn't this look a little as if you exercised your discretion by only stopping a fight when the School-house boy is getting the worst of it?"

Brooke, it must be confessed, felt rather gravelled.

"Now remember," added the Doctor, as he stopped at the turret-door, "this fight is not to go on—you'll see to that. And I expect you to stop all fights in future at once."

"Very well, sir," said Young Brooke, touching his hat, and not sorry to see the turret-door close behind the Doctor's back.

Meantime Tom and the stanchest of his adherents had reached Harrowell's, and Sally was bustling about to get them a late tea, while Stumps had been sent off to Tew the butcher, to get a piece of raw beef for Tom's eye, which was to be healed off-hand, so that he might show well in the morning. He was not a bit the worse except a slight difficulty in his vision, a singing in his ears, and a sprained thumb, which he kept in a cold water bandage, while he drank lots of tea,







Tom, looking up at them. "How they must abuse me and East, and pray for the Doctor for stopping the singing!"

"There! look, look!" cried Arthur, "don't you see the old fellow without a tail coming up? Martin used to call him the 'clerk.' He can't steer himself. You never saw such fun as he is in a high wind, when he can't steer himself home, and gets carried right past the trees, and has to bear up again and again before he can perch."

The locking-up bell began to toll, and the two boys were silent, and listened to it. The sound soon carried Tom off to the river and the woods, and he began to go over in his mind the many occasions on which he had heard that toll coming fatality down the breeze, and had to pack his rod in a hurry, and make a run for it, to get in before the gates were shut. He was roused with a start from his memories by Arthur's voice, gentle and weak from his late illness.

"Tom, will you be angry if I talk to you very seriously?"

"No, dear old boy, not I. But ain't you faint, Arthur, or ill? What can I get you? Don't say anything to hurt yourself now—you are very weak; let me come up again."

"No, no, I shan't hurt myself; I'd sooner speak to you now, if you don't mind. I've asked Mary to tell the Doctor that you are with me, so you needn't go down to calling-over; and I mayn't have another chance, for I shall most likely have to go home for change of air to get well, and mayn't come back this half."

"Oh, do you think you must go away before the end of the half? I'm so sorry. It's more than five weeks yet to the holidays, and all the fifth-form examination and half the cricket matches to come yet. And what shall I do all that time alone in our study? Why, Arthur, it will be more than twelve weeks before I see you again. Oh, hang it, I can't stand that! Besides, who's to keep me up to working at the examination-books? I shall come out bottom of the form as sure as eggs is eggs."

Tom went rattling on, half in joke, half in earnest, for he wanted to get Arthur out of his serious vein, thinking it would do him harm.

In another minute nine o'clock struck, and a gentle tap at the door called them both back to the world again. They did not answer, however, for a moment, and so the door opened and a lady came in, carrying a candle.

She went straight to the sofa, and took hold of Arthur's hand, and then stooped down and kissed him.

"My dearest boy, you feel a little feverish again. Why didn't you have lights? You've talked too much, and excited yourself in the dark."

"Oh no, mother, you can't think how well I feel. I shall start with you to-morrow for Devonshire. But, mother, here's my friend, here's Tom Brown—you know him?"

"Yes, indeed, I've known him for years," she said, and held out her hand to Tom, who was now standing up behind the sofa. This was Arthur's mother: tall and slight and fair, with masses of golden hair drawn back from the broad white forehead, and the calm blue eye meeting his so deep and open—the eye that he knew so well, for it was his friend's over again, and the lovely tender mouth that trembled while he looked. She stood there a woman of thirty-eight, old enough to be his mother, and one whose face showed the lines which must be written on the faces of good men's wives and widows—but he thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. He couldn't help wondering if Arthur's sisters were like her.

Tom held her hand, and looked on straight in her face; he could neither let it go nor speak.

"Now, Tom," said Arthur, laughing, "where are your manners? You'll stare my mother out of countenance." Tom dropped the little hand with a sigh. "There, sit down, both of you. Here, dearest mother, there's room here," and he made a place on the sofa for her. "Tom, you needn't go; I'm sure you won't be called up at first lesson." Tom felt that he would risk being flogged at every lesson for the rest of his natural school-life, so sat down. "And now," said Arthur, "I have realized one of the dearest wishes of my life—to see you two together."

And then he led away the talk to their home in Devonshire, and the red bright earth, and the deep green combs, and the peat streams like cairngorm pebbles, and the wild moor with its high cloudy firs for a giant background to the picture—till Tom got jealous, and stood up for the clear chalk streams and the emerald water meadows and great elms and willows of the dear old Royal county, as he gloried to call it. And the mother sat on quiet and loving, rejoicing in their life. The quarter-to-ten struck, and the bell rang for bed, before they had well begun their talk, as it seemed.

Then Tom rose with a sigh to go.

"Shall I see you in the morning, Geordie?" said he, as he shook his friend's hand. "Never mind, though; you'll be back next half."

Arthur's mother got up and walked with him to the door, and there gave him her hand again, and again his eyes met that deep loving look, which was like a spell upon him. Her voice trembled slightly as she said, "Good-night—you are one who knows what our Father has promised to the friend of the widow and the fatherless. May He deal with you as you have dealt with me and mine!"

Tom was quite upset; he mumbled something about owing everything good in him to Geordie—looked in her face again, pressed her hand to his lips, and rushed down stairs to his study, where he sat till old Thomas came kicking at the door, to tell him his allowance would be stopped if he didn't go off to bed. (It would have been stopped anyhow, but that he was a great favorite with the old gentleman, who loved to come out in the afternoons into the close to Tom's wicket, and bowl slow twisters to him, and talk of the glories of bygone Surrey heroes, with whom he had played former generations). So Tom roused himself, and took up his candle to go to bed; and then for the first time was aware of a beautiful new fishing-rod, with old Eton's mark on it, and a splendidly bound Bible, which lay on his table, on the title-page of which was written: "TOM BROWN, from his affectionate and grateful friends, Frances Jane Arthur; George Arthur."

I leave you all to guess how he slept, and what he dreamt of.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning, after breakfast, Tom, East, and Gower met as usual, to learn their second lesson together. A proposal of giving up the crib to the others, and having found no better way (as indeed none better can ever be found), told them simply how he had been to see Arthur, who had talked to him upon the subject, and what he had said, and for his part he had made up his mind, and wasn't going to use cribs any more; and not being quite sure of his ground, took the high and pathetic tone, and was proceeding to say, "how that, having learned his lessons with them for so many years, it would grieve him much to put an end to the arrangement, and he hoped at any rate that if they wouldn't go on with him, they should still be just as good friends, and respect one another's motives—but—"

Here the other boys who had been listening with open eyes and ears, burst in—

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Gower. "Here, East, get down the crib and find the place."

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy!" said East, proceeding to do as he was bidden, "that it should ever have come to this. I knew Arthur'd be the ruin of you some day, and you of me. And now the time's come"—and he made a doleful face.

"I don't know about ruin," answered Tom; "I know that you and I would have had the sack long ago if it hadn't been for him. And you know it as well as I."

"Well, we were in a baddish way before he came, I own; but this new crotchet of his is past a joke."

"Let's give it a trial, Harry; come—you know how often he has been right and we wrong."

"Now, don't you two be jawing away about young Square-toes," struck in Gower. "He's no end of a sucking wiseacre, I dare say, but we've no time to lose, and I've got to be at the fives-court at half-past nine."

"I say, Gower," said Tom, appealingly, "be a good fellow, and let's try and get on without the crib."

"What! in this chorus? Why, we shan't get through ten lines."

"I say, Tom," cried East, having hit on a new idea, "don't you remember, when we were in the upper fourth, and old Momus caught me construing off the leaf of a crib which I'd torn out and put in my book, and which would float out on the floor; he sent me up to be flogged for it?"

"Yes, I remember it very well."

"Well, the Doctor, after he'd flogged me, told me himself that he didn't flog me for using a translation, but for taking it into lesson, and using it there when I hadn't learnt a word before I came in. He said there was no harm in using a translation to get a clue to hard passages, if you tried all you could first to make them out without."

"Did he, though?" said Tom, "then Arthur must be wrong."

"Of course he is," said Gower, "the little prig! We'll only use the crib when we can't construe without it. Go ahead, East."

"Well, Tom," said East, seriously, "when you and I came to school, there were none of these sort of notions. You may be right—I dare say you are. Only what one has always felt about the masters is that it's a fair trial of skill and last, between us and them—like a match at football or a battle. We're natural enemies in school—that's the fact. We've got to learn so much Latin and Greek and do so many verses, and they've got to see that we do it. If we can slip the collar and do so much less without getting caught, that's one to us. If they can get more out of us, or catch us shirking, that's one to them. All's fair in war but lying. If I run my luck against theirs, and go into school without looking at my lessons, and don't get called up, why am I a snob or a sneak? I don't tell the master I've learnt it. He's got to find out whether I have or not; what's he paid for? If he calls me up and I get flogged, he makes me write it out in Greek and English. Very good; he's caught me and I don't grumble. I grant you if I go and snivel to him, and tell him I've really tried to learn it, but found it so hard without a translation, or say I have a toothache or any humbug of that kind, I'm a snob. That's my school morality; it's

served me and you too, Tom, for the matter of that, these five years. And it's all clear and fair, no mistake about it. We understand it, and they understand it, and I don't know what we're to come to with any other."

Tom looked at him pleased and a little puzzled. He had never heard East speak his mind seriously before, and couldn't help feeling how completely he had hit his own theory and practice up to that time.

"Thank you, old fellow," said he. "You're a good old brick to be serious and not put out with me. I said more than I meant, I dare say, only you see I know I'm right; whatever you and Gower and the rest do, I shall hold on—I must. And as it's all new and an uphill game, you see, one must hit hard and hold on tight at first."

"Very good," said East; "hold on and hit away, only don't hit under the line."

"But I must bring you over, Harry, or I shan't be comfortable. Now, I'll allow all you've said. We've always been honorable enemies with the masters. We found a state of war when we came, and went into it of course. Only don't you think things are altered a good deal? I don't feel as I used to the masters. They seem to me to treat one quite differently."

"Yes, perhaps they do," said East; "there's a new set, you see, mostly, who don't feel sure of themselves yet. They don't want to fight till they know the ground."

"I don't think it's only that," said Tom. "And then the Doctor, he does treat one so openly, and like a gentleman, and as if one was working with him."

"Well, so he does," said East; "he's a splendid fellow, and when I get into the sixth I shall act accordingly. Only you know he has nothing to do with our lessons now, except examining us. I say, though," looking at his watch, "it's just the quarter. Come along."

As they walked out they got a message, to say "that Arthur was just starting and would like to say good-bye;" so they went down to the private entrance of the School-house, and found an open carriage, with Arthur propped up with pillows in it, looking already better, Tom thought.

They jumped up on to the steps to shake hands with him, and Tom mumbled thanks for the presents he had found in his study, and looked round anxiously for Arthur's mother.

East, who had fallen back into his usual humor, looked quaintly at Arthur, and said—

"So you've been at it again, through that hot-headed convert of yours there. He's been making our lives a burden to us all the morning about using cribs. I shall get flogged to a certainty at second lesson, if I'm called up."

Arthur blushed and looked down. Tom struck in—

"Oh, it's all right. He's converted already; he always comes through the mud after us, grumbling and spluttering."

The clock struck, and they had to go off to school, wishing Arthur a pleasant holiday; Tom lingering behind a moment to send his thanks and love to Arthur's mother.

Tom renewed the discussion after second lesson, and succeeded so far as to get East to promise to give the new plan a fair trial.

Encouraged by his success, in the evening, when they were sitting alone in the large study, where East lived now almost, "vice Arthur on leave," after examining the new fishing-rod, which both pronounced to be the genuine article ("play enough to throw a midge tied on a single hair against the wind, and strength enough to hold a grampus"), they naturally began talking about Arthur. Tom, who was still bubbling over with last night's scene and all the thoughts of the last week, and wanting to clinch and fix the whole in his own mind, which he could never do without first going through the process of belaboring somebody else with it all, suddenly rushed into the subject of Arthur's illness, and what he said and thought about death.

East had given him the desired opening; after a serio-comic grumble, "that life wasn't worth having, now they were tied to a young beggar, who was always raising his standard, and that he, East was like a prophet's donkey, who was obliged to struggle on after the donkey-man who went after the prophet; that he had none of the pleasure of starting the new crotchets, and didn't half understand them, but had to take the kicks and carry the luggage as if he had all the fun"—he threw his legs up on to the sofa, and put his hands behind his head, and said—

"Well, after all, he's the most wonderful little fellow I ever came across. There ain't such a meek, humble boy in the school. Hanged if I don't think now, really, Tom, that he believes himself a much worse fellow than you or I, and that he don't think he has more influence in the house than Dot Bowles, who came last quarter and isn't seen yet. But he turns you and me round his little finger, old boy—there's no mistake about that." And East nodded at Tom sagaciously.

"Now or never," thought Tom; so shutting his eyes and hardening his heart, he went straight at it, repeating all that Arthur had said, as near as he could remember it, in the very words, and all he had himself thought. The life seemed to ooze out of it as he went on, and several times he felt inclined to stop, give it all up, and change the subject. But somehow he was borne on, he had a necessity upon him to speak it all out, and did so.



At the end he looked at East with some anxiety, and was delighted to see that that young gentleman was thoughtful and attentive. The fact is, that in the stage of his inner life at which Tom had lately arrived, his intimacy with, and friendship for East could not have lasted if he had not made him aware of, and a sharer in, the thoughts that were beginning to exercise him. Nor indeed could the friendship have lasted if East had shown no sympathy with these thoughts; so that it was a great relief to have unbosomed himself, and to have found that his friend could listen.

East had remained lying down until Tom finished speaking, as if fearing to interrupt him; he now sat at the table, and leant his head on one hand, taking up a pencil with the other, and working little holes with it in the table-cover. After a bit he looked up, stopped the pencil, and said, "Thank you very much, old fellow; there's no other boy in the house would have done it for me but you or Arthur. I can see well enough," he went on after a pause, "all the best big fellows look on me with suspicion; they think I'm a devil-may-care, reckless youngscamp. So I am—eleven hours out of the twelve—but not the twelfth. Then all of our contemporaries worth knowing follow suit, of course; we're very good friends at games and all that, but not a soul of them but you and Arthur ever tried to break through the crust, and see whether there was anything at the bottom of me; and then the bad ones I won't stand, and they know that."

"Don't you think that's half fancy, Harry?"

"Not a bit of it," said East bitterly, pegging away with his pencil. "I see it all plain enough. Bless you, you think every body's as straightforward and kind-hearted as you are."

"Well, but what's the reason of it? There must be a reason. You can play all the games as well as any one, and sing the best song, and are the best company in the house. You fancy you're not liked, Harry. It's all fancy."

"I only wish it was, Tom. I know I could be popular enough with all the bad ones, but that I won't have, and the good ones won't have me."

But East's powers of remaining serious were exhausted, and in five minutes he was saying the most ridiculous things he could think of, till Tom was almost getting angry again.

And so their talk finished for that time, and they tried to learn first lesson; with very poor success, as appeared next morning, when they were called up and narrowly escaped being flogged, when ill-luck, however, did not sit heavily on either of their souls.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TOM BROWN'S LAST MATCH.

Another two years have passed, and it is again the end of the summer half-year at Rugby; in fact, the school has broken up. The fifth form examinations were over last week, and upon them have followed the Speeches, and the sixth-form examinations for exhibitions; and they, too, are over now. The boys have gone to all the winds of heaven, except the town boys and the eleven, and the few enthusiasts besides who have asked leave to stay in their houses to see the result of the cricket matches. For this year the Wellesburn return match and the Marylebone match are played at Rugby, to the great delight of the town and neighborhood, and the sorrow of those aspiring young cricketers who have been reckoning for the last three months on showing off at Lord's ground.

The Doctor started for the Lakes yesterday morning, after an interview with the Captain of the eleven, in the presence of Thomas, at which he arranged in what School the cricket dinners were to be, and all other matters necessary for the satisfactory carrying out of the festivities; and warned them as to keeping all spirituous liquors out of the close, and having the gates closed by nine o'clock.

The Wellesburn match was played out with great success yesterday, the School winning by three wickets; and to-day the great event of the cricketing year, the Marylebone match, is being played. What a match it has been! The London eleven came down by an afternoon train yesterday, in time to see the end of the Wellesburn match; and as soon as it was over, their leading men and umpire inspected the ground, criticising it rather unmercifully. The Captain of the School eleven, and one or two others, who had played the Lord's match before, and knew old Mr. Aislabie and several of the Lord's men, accompanied them; while the rest of the eleven looked on from under the Three Trees with admiring eyes, and asked one another the names of the illustrious strangers, and recounted how many runs each of them had made in the late matches in the *Bell's Life*. They looked such hard-bitten, wiry, whiskered fellows, that their young adversaries felt rather desponding as to the result of the morrow's match. The ground was at last chosen, and two men set to work upon it to water and roll; and then, there being yet some half-hour of daylight, some one had suggested a dance on the turf. The close was half full of citizens and their families, and the idea was hailed with enthusiasm. The cornopean-player was still on the ground in five minutes the eleven and half a dozen of the Wellesburn and Marylebone men got partners somehow or another, and merry country-dance was going on, to which every one flocked, and new couples joined in every minute, till there

were a hundred of them going down the middle and up again—and the long line of School-buildings looked gravely down on them, every window glowing with the last rays of the western sun, and the rooks clanged about in the tops of the old elms, greatly excited, and resolved on having their country-dance too, and the great flag flapped lazily in the gentle western breeze. Altogether it was a sight which would have made glad the heart of our brave old founder, Lawrence Sheriff, if he were half as good a fellow as I take him to have been. It was a cheerful sight to see; but what made it so valuable in the sight of the Captain of the School eleven was, that he there saw his young hands shaking off their shyness and awe of the Lord's men as they crossed hands and capered about on the grass together; for the strangers entered into it all, and threw away their cigars, and danced and shouted like boys; while old Mr. Aislabie stood by looking on in his white hat, leaning on a bat, in benevolent enjoyment. "This hop will be worth thirty runs to us to-morrow, and will be the making of Raggles and Johnson," thinks the young leader, as he revolves many things in his mind, standing by the side of Mr. Aislabie, whom he will not leave for a minute, for he feels that the character of the School for courtesy is resting on his shoulders.

But when a quarter to nine struck, and he saw old Thomas beginning to fidget about with the keys in his hand, he thought of the Doctor's parting monition, and stopped the cornopean at once, notwithstanding the loud-voiced remonstrances from all sides; and the crowd scattered away from the close, the eleven all going into the School-house, where supper and beds were provided for them by the Doctor's orders.

Deep had been the consultations at supper as to the order of going in, who should bowl the first over, whether it would be best to play steady or freely; and the youngest hands declared that they shouldn't be a bit nervous, and praised their opponents as the jolliest fellows in the world, except perhaps their old friends, the Wellesburn men. How far a little good nature from their elders will go with the right sort of boys!

The morning had dawned bright and warm, to the intense relief of many an anxious youngster, up betimes to mark the signs of the weather. The eleven went down in a body before breakfast, for a plunge in the cold bath in the corner of the close. The ground was in splendid order, and soon after ten o'clock, before spectators had arrived, all was ready, and two of the Lord's men took their places at the wicket; the School with usual liberality of young hands, putting their adversaries in first. Old Bailey stepped up to the wicket, and called play, and the match was begun.

"Oh, well bowled! well bowled, Johnson!" cries the captain, catching up the ball and sending it high above the rook-trees, while the third Marylebone man walks away from the wicket, and old Bailey gravely sets up the middle stump again and puts the balls on.

"How many runs!" Away scamper three boys to the scoring-table, and are back again in a minute amongst the rest eleven, who are collected together in a knot between wicket. "Only eighteen runs and three wickets down!" "Huzzah for old Rugby!" sings out Jack Raggles the long-stop, toughest and burliest of boys, commonly called "Swiper Jack;" and forthwith stands on his head, and brandishes his legs in the air in triumph, till the next boy catches hold of his heels and throws him over on his back.

"Steady there, don't be such an ass, Jack," says the Captain; "we haven't got the best wicket, yet; they steal more runs than any man in England."

And they all find that they have got their work to do now; the new-comer's off-hitting is tremendous, and his running like a flash of lightning. He is never in his ground, except when his wicket is down. Nothing in the whole game so trying to boys; he has stolen three byes in the first ten minutes, and Jack Raggles is furious, and begins throwing over savagely to the farther wicket, until he is sternly stopped by the Captain. It is all that young gentleman can do to keep his team steady, but he knows that everything depends on it, and faces his work bravely. The score creeps up to fifty, the boy begins to look blank, and the spectators who are now mastering strong, are very silent. The ball flies off his bat to all parts of the field, and he gives no rest and no catches to any one. But cricket is full of glorious chances, and the goddess who presides over it loves to bring down the most skillful players. Johnson the young bowler is getting wild, and bowls a ball almost wide to the off; the batter steps out and cuts it beautifully to where cover-point is standing very deep, in fact almost off the ground. The ball comes skimming and twisting along about three feet from the ground; he rushes at it, and it sticks somehow or other in the fingers of his left hand, to the utter astonishment of himself and the whole field.

Such a catch hasn't been made in the close for years, and the cheering is maddening. "Pretty cricket," says the Captain, throwing himself on the ground by the deserted wicket with a long breath; he feels that a crisis has passed.

I wish I had space to describe the match; how the Captain stumped the next man off a leg-shooter, and bowled small cobs to old Mr. Aislabie, who came in for the last wicket. How the Lord's

men were out by half-past twelve o'clock for ninety-eight runs. How the Captain of the School eleven went in first to give his men pluck, and scored twenty-five in beautiful style; how Rugby was only four behind in the first innings. What a glorious dinner they had in the fourth-form School, and how the cover-point hitter sang the most topping comic songs, and old Mr. Aislabie made the best speeches that ever were heard, afterwards. But I haven't space, that's the fact, and so you must fancy it all, and carry yourselves on to half-past seven o'clock, when the School are again in, with five wickets down and only thirty-two runs to make to win. The Marylebone men played carelessly in their second innings, but they are working like horses now to save the match.

There is much healthy, hearty, happy life scattered up and down the close; but the group to which I beg to call your especial attention is there, on the slope of the island, which looks towards the cricket-ground. It consists of three figures; two are seated on the bench, and one on the ground at their feet. The first, a tall, slight and rather gaunt man, with a bushy eyebrow, and a dry humorous smile, is evidently a clergyman. He is carelessly dressed, and looks rather used up, which isn't much to be wondered at, seeing that he has just finished six weeks of examination work; but there he basks, and spreads himself out in the evening sun, bent on enjoying life, though he doesn't quite know what to do with his arms and legs. Surely it is our friend the young Master, whom we have had glimpses of before, but his face has gained a great deal since we last came across him.

And by his side, in white flannel shirt and trousers, straw hat, the Captain's belt, and the untanned yellow cricket-shoes which all the eleven wear, sits a strapping figure, near six feet high with ruddy tanned face and whiskers, curly brown hair, and a laughing dancing eye. He is leaning forward with his elbows resting on his knees, and dandling his favorite bat, with which he has made thirty or forty runs to-day, in his strong brown hands. It is Tom Brown, grown into a young man nineteen years old, a preceptor and Captain of the eleven spending his last day as a Rugby boy, and let us hope as much wiser as he is bigger, since we last had the pleasure of coming across him.

And at their feet on the warm dry ground, similarly dressed sits Arthur, Turkish fashion, with his bat across his knees. He too is no longer a boy, less of a boy, in fact than Tom, if one may judge from the thoughtfulness of his face, which is somewhat paler too than one could wish; but his figure, though slight, is well knit and active, and all his old timidity has disappeared, and is replaced by silent quaint fun, with which his face twinkles all over, as he listens to the broken talk between the other two, in which he joins every now and then.

All three are watching the game eagerly, and joining in the cheering which follows every good hit. It is pleasing to see the easy friendly joking which the pupils are on with their master, perfectly respectful, yet with no reserve and nothing forced in their intercourse. Tom has clearly abandoned the old theory of "natural enemies" in this case at any rate.

"Oh! well played—bravo, Johnson!" shouted Arthur, dropping his hat and clapping furiously, and Tom joined in with a "Bravo, Johnson!" which might have been heard at the chapel.

"Eh! what was it? I didn't see," inquired the master; "they only got one run, I thought?"

"No, but such a ball, three-quarters length and coming straight for his leg-bail. Nothing but that turn of the wrist could have saved him, and he drew it away to leg for a safe one. Bravo, Johnson!"

"How well they are bowling, though," said Arthur; "they don't mean to be beat, I can see."

"Out! Bailey has given him out—you see, Tom!" cries Arthur. "How foolish of them to run so hard."

"Well, it can't be helped, he has played very well. Who's turn is it to go in?"

"I don't know. They've got your list in the tent."

"Let's go and see," said Tom, rising, but at this moment Jack Raggles and two or three more came running to the island moat.

"Oh, Brown, mayn't I go in next?" shouts the Swiper.

"Who's name is next on the list?" says the Captain.

"Winters, and then Arthurs," answers the boy who carries it; "but there are only twenty-six runs to get, and no time to lose. I heard Mr. Aislabie say that the stumps must be drawn at a quarter past eight exactly."

"Oh, do let the Swiper go in," cheers the boys; so Tom yields against his better judgment.

"I dare say now I've lost the match by this nonsense," he says, as he sits down again; "they'll be sure to get Jack's wicket in three or four minutes; however, you'll have the chance, sir, of seeing a hard hit or two," adds he smiling, turning to the master.

"Come, none of your irony Brown," answers the master. "I'm beginning to understand the game scientifically. What a noble game it is too!"

"Isn't it? But it's more than a game. It's a institution," says Tom.

"Yes," says Arthur, "the birthright of British



boys, old and young, as *habeas corpus* and trial by jury are of British men."

"The discipline and reliance on one another which it teaches is so valuable, I think," went on the master, "it ought to be such an unselfish game. It merges the individual in the eleven; he doesn't play that he may win, but that his side may."

"That's very true," said Tom, "and that's why football and cricket, now one comes to think of it, are much better games than fives or hare-and-hounds, or any others where the object is to come in first or to win for one's self, and not that one's side may win."

"And then the Captain of the eleven!" said the master, "what a post is his in our School-world! almost as hard as the Doctor's; requiring skill and gentleness and firmness, and I know not what other rare qualities."

"Which don't he may wish he may get!" said Tom, laughing; "at any rate he hasn't got them yet, or he wouldn't have been such a flat to-night as to let Jack Raggles go in, out of his turn."

"Ah! the Doctor never would have done that," said Arthur demurely. "Tom, you've a great deal to learn yet in the art of ruling."

"Well, I wish you'd tell the Doctor so, then, and get him to let me stop till I'm twenty. I don't want to leave, I'm sure."

"What a sight it is," broke in the master, "the Doctor as a ruler! Perhaps ours is the only little corner in the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled just now. I'm more and more thankful every day of my life that I came here to be under him."

"So am I, I'm sure," said Tom; "and more and more sorry that I've got to leave."

"Every place and thing one sees here reminds one of some wise act of his," went on the master. "This island now—you remember the time, Brown, when it was laid out in small gardens, and cultivated by frost-bitten fags in February and March?"

"Of course I do," said Tom; "didn't I hate spending two hours in the afternoons grubbing in the tough dirt with the stump of a fives'-bat? But turf-cart was good fun enough."

"I dare say it was, but it was always leading to fights with the townspeople; and then the stealing flowers out of all the gardens in Rugby for the Easter show was abominable."

"Well, so it was," said Tom, looking down, "but we fags couldn't help ourselves. But what has that to do with the Doctor's ruling?"

"A great deal, I think," said the master; "what brought island-faggotting to an end?"

"Why, the Easter Speeches were put off till Midsummer," said Tom, "and the sixth had gymnastic poles put up here."

"Well, and who changed the time of the Speeches, and put the idea of gymnastic poles into the heads of their worshipers the sixth form?" said the master.

"The Doctor, I suppose," said Tom. "I never thought of that."

"Of course you didn't," said the master, "or else, fag as you were, you would have shouted with the whole school against putting down old customs. And that's the way that all the Doctor's reforms have been carried out when he has been left to himself—quietly and naturally, putting a good thing in the place of a bad, and letting the bad die out; no wavering and no hurry—the best thing that could be done for the time being, and patience for the rest."

"Just Tom's own way," chimed in Arthur, nudging Tom with his elbow, "driving a nail where it will go;" to which allusion Tom answered by a sly kick.

"Exactly so," said the master, innocent of the allusion and by-play.

Meantime Jack Raggles, with his sleeves tucked up above his great brown elbow, scorning pads and gloves, has presented himself at the wicket; and, having run one for a forward drive of Johnson's, is about to receive his first ball. There are only twenty-four runs to make, and four wickets to go down; a winning match if they play decently steady. The ball is a very swift one, and rises fast, catching Jack on the outside of the thigh, and bounding away as if from india-rubber, while they run too for a leg-bye amidst great applause, and shouts from Jack's many admirers. The next ball is a beautifully-pitched ball for the outer stump, which the reckless and unfeeling Jack catches held of, and hits right round to leg for five, while the applause becomes deafening; only seventeen runs to get four wickets—the game is all but ours!

It is over now, and Jack walks swaggering about his wicket, with his bat over his shoulder, while Mr. Aislabie holds a short parley with his men. Then the cover-point hitter, that cunning man, goes on to bowl slow twisters. Jack waves his hand triumphantly towards the tent, as much as to say, "See if I don't finish it all off now in three hits!"

Alas, my son Jack! the enemy is too old for thee. The first ball of the over Jack steps out and meets, swiping with all his force. If he had only allowed for the twist! but he hasn't, and so the ball goes spinning up straight in the air, as if it would never come down again. Away runs Jack, shouting and trusting to the chapter of accidents, but the bowler runs steadily under it, judging every spin, and calling out "I have it," catches it, and playfully pitches it on to the back of the

stalwart Jack, who is departing with a rueful countenance.

"I knew how it would be," says Tom, rising. "Come along; the game's getting very serious."

So they leave the island and go to the tent, and after deep consultation Arthur is sent in, and goes off to the wicket with a last exhortation from Tom to play steady and keep his bat straight. To the suggestions that Winter is the best bat left Tom only replies, "Arthur is the steadiest, and Johnson will make the runs if the wicket is only kept up."

"I am surprised to see Arthur in the eleven," said the master, as they stood together in front of the dense crowd, which was now closing in round the ground.

"Well, I'm not quite sure that he ought to be in for his play," said Tom, "but I couldn't help putting him in. It will do him so much good, and you can't think what I owe him."

The master smiled. The clock strikes eight, and the whole field becomes fevered with excitement. Arthur, after two narrow escapes, scores one; and Johnson gets the ball. The bowling and fielding are superb, and Johnson's batting worthy the occasion. He makes here a two, and there a one, managing to keep the ball to himself, and Arthur backs up and runs perfectly; only eleven runs to make now, and the crowd scarcely breathe. At last Arthur gets the ball again, and actually drives it forward for two, and feels prouder than when he got the three best prizes, at hearing Tom's shout of joy, "Well played, well played, young un!"

But the next ball is too much for a young hand, and his balls fly different ways. Nine runs to make, and two wickets to go down—it is too much for human nerves.

Before Winter can get in, the omnibus which is to take the Lord's men to the train pulls up at the side of the close, and Mr. Aislabie and Tom consult, and give out that the stumps will be drawn after the next over. And so ends the great match. Winter and Johnson carry out their bats and, it being a one day's match, the Lord's men are declared the winners, they having scored the most in the first innings.

But such a defeat is a victory; so think Tom and all the School eleven, as they accompany their conquerors to the omnibus, and send them off with three ringing cheers, after Mr. Aislabie has shaken hands all round, saying to Tom, "I must compliment you, sir, on your eleven, and I hope we shall have you for a member if you come up to town."

As Tom and the rest of the eleven were turning back into the close, and every body was beginning to cry out for another country-dance, encouraged by the success of the night before, the young master, who was just leaving the close, stopped him and asked him to come up to tea at half-past eight, adding, "I won't keep you more than half an hour, and ask Arthur to come up too."

"I'll come up with you directly, if you'll let me," said Tom, "for I feel rather melancholy, and not quite up to the country-dance and supper with the rest."

"Do by all means," said the master; "I'll wait here for you."

So Tom went off to get his boots and things from the tent, to tell Arthur of the invitation, and to speak to his second in command about stopping the dancing and shutting up the close as soon as it grew dusk. Arthur promised to follow as soon as he had had a dance. So Tom handed his things over to the man in charge of the tent, and walked quietly away to the gate where the master was waiting, and the two took their way together up the Hillmorton road.

After some talk on the matter, and other indifferent subjects, the conversation came naturally back to Tom's approaching departure, over which he began again to make his moan.

"Well, we all shall miss you quite as much as you will miss us," said the master. "You are the Nestor of the School now, are you not?"

"Yes, ever since East left," answered Tom.

"By-the-by, have you heard from him?"

"Yes, I had a letter in February, just before he started for India to join his regiment."

"He will make a capital officer."

"Ay, won't he!" said Tom, brightening; "no fellow could handle boys better, and I suppose soldiers are very like boys. And he'll never tell them to go where he won't go himself. No mistake about that—a braver fellow never walked."

"His year in the sixth will have taught him a good deal that will be useful to him now."

"So it will," said Tom, staring into the fire. "Poor dear Harry," he went on, "how well I remember the day we were put out of the twenty. How he rose to the situation, and burnt his cigar, and gave away his pistols, and pondered on cases, and gave away his pistols, and pondered on the constitutional authority of the sixth, and his new duties to the Doctor, and the fifth form, and the fags. Ay, and no fellow ever acted up to them better, though he was always a people's man—for the fags, and against constituted authorities. He couldn't help that, you know. I'm sure the Doctor must have liked him!" said Tom, looking up inquiringly.

"The Doctor sees the good in every one, and appreciates it," said the master, dogmatically; "but I hope East will get a good Colonel. He won't do if he can't respect those above him. How long it took him, even here, to learn the lesson of obeying!"

"Well, I wish I were alongside of him," said Tom. "If I can't be at Rugby, I want to be at work in the world, and not dawdling away three years at Oxford."

"What do you mean by 'at work in the world?'" said the master, pausing, with his lips close to the saucerful of tea, and peering at Tom over it.

"Well, I mean real work; one's profession; whatever one will have really to do, and make one's living by. I want to be doing some real good, feeling that I am not only a play in the world," answered Tom, rather puzzled to find out himself what he really did mean.

"You are mixing up two very different things in your head, I think, Brown," said the master, putting down the empty saucer, "and you ought to get clear about them. You talk of 'working to get your living,' and 'doing some real good in the world,' in the same breath. Now, you may be getting a very good living in a profession, and yet doing no good at all in the world, but quite the contrary, at the same time. Keep the latter before you as your one object, and you will be right, whether you make a living or not; but if you dwell on the other, you'll very likely drop into mere money-making, and let the world take care of itself for good or evil. Don't be in a hurry about finding your work in the world for yourself; you are not old enough to judge for yourself yet, but just look about you in the place you find yourself in, and try to make things a little better and honest there. You'll find plenty to keep your hand in at Oxford, or wherever else you go. And don't be led away to think this part of the world important, and that unimportant. Every corner of the world is important. No man knows whether this part of the world is most so, but every man may do some honest work in his own corner." And then the good man went on to talk wisely to Tom of the sort of work which he might take up as an undergraduate; and warned him of the prevalent University sins, and explained to him the many and great differences between University and School life; till the twilight changed into darkness, and they heard the truant servants stealing in by the back entrance.

"I wonder where Arthur can be," said Tom at last, looking at his watch; "why, it's nearly half-past nine already."

"Oh, he is comfortably at supper with the eleven, forgetful of his oldest friends," said the master. "Nothing has given me greater pleasure," he went on, "than your friendship for him; it has been the making of you both."

"Of me, at any rate," answered Tom; "I should never have been here now but for him. It was the luckiest chance in the world that sent him to Rugby, and made him my chum."

"Why do you talk of lucky chances?" said the master; "I don't know that there are any such things in the world; at any rate there was neither luck nor chance in that matter."

Tom looked at him inquiringly, and he went on. "Do you remember when the Doctor lectured you and East at the end of one half-year, when you were in the shell, and had been getting into all sorts of scrapes?"

"Yes, well enough," said Tom; "it was the half-year before Arthur came."

"Exactly so," answered the master. "Now, I was with him a few minutes afterwards, and he was in great distress about you two. And, after some talk, we both agreed that you in particular wanted some object in the School beyond games and mischief; for it was quite clear that you never would make the regular school-work your first object. And so the Doctor, at the beginning of the next half-year, looked out the best of the new boys, and separated you and East, and put the young boy into your study, in the hope that when you had somebody to lean on you, you would begin to stand a little steadier yourself, and get manliness and thoughtfulness. And I can assure you he has watched the experiment ever since with great satisfaction. Ah! not one of you boys will ever know the anxiety you have given him, or the care with which he has watched over every step in your school lives."

Up to this time, Tom had never wholly given in to, or understood the Doctor. At first he had thoroughly feared him. For some years, as I have tried to show, he had learned to regard him and love and respect, and to think him a very great and wise and good man. But, as regarded his own position in the School, of which he was no little proud, Tom had no idea of giving any one credit for it but himself; and, truth to tell, was a very self-conceited young gentleman on the subject.

After a half concession of his previous shortcomings, and sorrowful adieu to his tutor, from whom he received two beautifully bound volumes of the Doctor's sermons, as a parting present, he marched down to the School-house, a hero worshipper who would have satisfied the soul of Thomas Carlyle himself.

There he found the eleven at high jinks after supper, Jack Raggles shouting comic songs, and performing feats of strength; and was greeted by a chorus of mingled remonstrance at his desertion, and joy at his reappearance. And falling in with the humor of the evening, was seen as great a boy as all the rest; and at ten o'clock was chaired round the quadrangle, on one of the hall benches borne aloft by the eleven, shouting in chorus, "For he's a jolly good fellow," while old Thomas, in a melting mood, and the other School-house servants, stood looking on.



And the next morning after breakfast he squared up all the cricketing accounts, went round to his tradesmen and other acquaintances and said his hearty good byes; and by twelve o'clock was in the train, and away for London, no longer a school boy, and divided in his thoughts between hero-worship, honest regrets over the long stage of his life which was now slipping out of sight behind him, and hopes and resolves for the next stage, upon which he was entering with all the confidence of a young traveller.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FINIS.

In the summer of 1842, our hero stopped once again at the well-known station; and, leaving his bag and fishing-rod with a porter, walked slowly and sadly up towards the town. It was now July. He had rushed away from Oxford the moment the term was over, for a fishing ramble in Scotland with two college friends, and had been for three weeks living on oat-cake, mutton-hams, and whisky, in the wildest parts of Skye. They had descended one sultry evening on the little inn at Kyle Rhea ferry, and while Tom and another of the party put the tackle together and began exploring the stream for a sea-trout for supper, the third strolled into the house to arrange for their entertainment. Presently, he came out in a loose blouse and slippers, a short pipe in his mouth, and an old newspaper in his hand, and threw himself on the heathery scrub which met the shingle, within easy hail of the fishermen. There he lay, the picture of free-and-easy, loafing, hand-to-mouth young England, "improving his mind," as he shouted to them, by the perusal of the fortnight-old weekly paper, soiled with the marks of toddy-glasses and tobacco-sashes, the legacy of the last traveller, which he had hunted out from the kitchen of the little hostelry, and being a youth of a communicative turn of mind, began imparting the contents to the fishermen as he went on.

"What a bother they are making about these wretched Corn-laws! Here's three or four columns full of nothing but sliding-scales and fixed duties.—Hang this tobacco, it's always going out!—Ah, here's something better—a splendid match between Kent and England, Brown! Kent winning by three wickets. Felix fifty-six runs without a chance, and not out!"

Tom, intent on a fish which has risen at him twice, answered only with a grunt.

"Anything about the Goodwood?" called out the third man.

"Rory-o-More drawn. Butterfly colt amiss," shouted the student.

"Just my luck," grumbled the inquirer, jerking his flies off the water, and throwing again with a heavy sullen splash, and frightening Tom's fish.

"I say, can't you throw lighter over there? we ain't fishing for grampuses," shouted Tom across the stream.

"Hullo, Brown! here's something for you," called out the reading man the next moment. "Why, your old master, Arnold of Rugby, is dead."

Tom's hand stopped half-way in his cast, and his line and flies went all tangling round and round his rod; you might have knocked him over with a feather. Neither of his companions took any notice of him, luckily; and with a violent effort he set to work mechanically to disentangle his line. He felt completely carried off his moral and intellectual legs, as if he had lost his standing-point in the invisible world. Besides which, the deep loving loyalty which he felt for his old leader made the shock intensely painful. It was the great wrench of his life, the first gap which the angel Death had made in his circle, and he felt numbed, and beaten down, and spiritless. Well, well! I believe it was good for him and for many others in like case; who had to learn by that loss that the soul of man cannot stand or lean upon any human prop, however strong and wise and good; but that he upon whom alone it can stand and lean will knock away all such props in his own wise and merciful way, until there is no ground or stay left but Himself, the Rock of Ages, upon whom alone a sure foundation for every soul of man is laid.

As he wearily labored at his line, the thought struck him, "It may be false, a mere newspaper lie," and he strode up to the recumbent smoker.

"Let me look at the paper," said he.

"Nothing else in it," answered the other, handing it to him listlessly. "Hullo, Brown! what's the matter, old fellow—ain't you well?"

"Where is it?" said Tom, turning over the leaves, his hands trembling, and his eyes swimming, so that he could not read.

"What! What are you looking for?" said his friend, jumping up and looking over his shoulder.

"That—about Arnold," said Tom.

"Oh, here," said the other, putting his finger on the paragraph. Tom read it over and over again; there could be no mistake of identity, though the account was short enough.

"Thank you," said he at last, dropping the paper, "I shall go for a walk; don't you and Herbert wait supper for me." And away he strode, up over the moor at the back of the house, to be alone, and master his grief if possible.

His friend looked after him, sympathising and wondering, and, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, walked over to Herbert. After a short parley, they walked together up to the house.

"I'm afraid that confounded newspaper has spoiled Brown's fun for this trip."

"How odd that he should be so fond of his old master," said Herbert. Yet they also were both public-school men.

The two, however, notwithstanding Tom's prohibition, waited supper for him, and had everything ready when he came back some half an hour afterwards. But he could not join in their cheerful talk, and the party was soon silent, notwithstanding the efforts of all three. One thing only had Tom resolved, and that was, that he couldn't stay in Scotland any longer; he felt an irresistible longing to get to Rugby, and then home, and soon broke it to the others, who had too much tact to oppose.

So by daylight the next morning he was marching through Ross-shire, and in the evening hit the Caledonian canal, took the next steamer, and travelled as fast as boat and railroad would carry him to the Rugby station.

As he walked up to the town, he felt shy and afraid of being seen, and took the back streets; why, he didn't know, but he followed his instinct. At the School-gates he made a dead pause; there was not a soul in the quadrangle—all was lonely, and silent, and sad. So with another effort he strode through the quadrangle, and into the School-house offices.

He found the little matron in her room in deep mourning; shook her hand, tried to talk, and moved nervously about; she was evidently thinking of the same subject as he, but he couldn't begin talking.

"Where shall I find Thomas?" said he at last getting desperate.

"In the servants' hall, I think sir. But won't you take anything?" said the matron looking rather disappointed.

"No thank you," said he, and strode off again to find the old Verger, who was sitting in his little den as of old, puzzling over hieroglyphics.

He looked up through his spectacles, as Tom seized his hand and wrung it.

"And you've heard all about it sir, I see," said he.

Tom nodded and then sat down on the shoe-board, while the old man told his tale, and wiped his spectacles, and fairly flowed over with quaint, homely, honest sorrow.

By the time he had done, Tom felt much better.

"Where is he buried, Thomas?" said he at last.

"Under the altar in the chapel, sir," answered Thomas. "You'd like to have the key I dare say."

"Thank you, Thomas—Yes, I should very much." And the old man fumbled among his bunch, and then got up, as though he would go with him; but after a few steps stopped short, and said, "Perhaps you'd like to go by yourself, sir?"

Tom nodded, and the bunch of keys were handed to him, with an injunction to be sure and lock the door after him, and bring them back before eight o'clock.

He walked quickly through the quadrangle and out into the close. The lounging which had been upon him and driven him thus far, like the gad-fly in the Greek legends, giving him no rest in mind or body, seemed all of a sudden not to be satisfied, but to shrivel up, and pall. "Why should I go on? It's no use," he thought, and threw himself at full length on the turf, and looked vaguely and listened at all the well-known objects. There were a few of the town-boys playing cricket, their wicket pitched on the best piece in the middle of the big-side ground, a sin about equal to sacrilege in the eyes of a captain of the eleven. He was very nearly getting up to go and send them off. "Pshaw! they won't remember me. They're more right there than I," he muttered. And the thought that his sceptre had departed, and his mark was wearing out, came home to him for the first time, and bitterly enough. He was lying on the very spot where the fights came off; where he himself had fought six years ago his first and last battle. He conjured up the scene till he could almost hear the shouts of the ring, and East's whisper in his ear; and looking across the close to the Doctor's private door, half expected to see it open, and the tall figure in cap and gown come striding under the elm-trees towards him.

No, not that sight could never be seen again. There was no flag flying on the round tower; the School-house windows were all shuttered up; and when the flag went up again, and the shutters came down, it would be to welcome a stranger. All that was left on earth of him whom he had honored, was lying cold and still under the chapel floor. He would go in and see the place once more, and then leave it once for all. New men and new methods might do for other people: let those who would, worship the rising star; he at least would be faithful to the sun which had set. And so he got up, and walked to the chapel door and unlocked it, fancying himself the only mourner in all the broad land, and feeding on his own selfish sorrow.

He passed through the vestibule, and when paused for a moment to glance over the empty benches. His heart was still proud and high, and he walked up to the seat which he had last occupied as a sixth-form boy, and sat himself down there to collect his thoughts.

And, truth to tell, they needed collecting and setting in order not a little. The memories of eight years were all dancing through his brain, and carrying him about whither they would; while beneath them all, his heart was throbbing with

the dull sense of a loss that could never be made up to him. The rays of the evening sun came solemnly through the painted windows above his head, and fell in gorgeous colors on the opposite wall, and the perfect stillness soothed his spirit by little and little. And he turned to the pulpit, and looked at it, and then, leaning forward with his head on his hands, groaned loudly. "If he could only have seen the Doctor again for one five minutes; have told him all that was in his heart, what he owed to him, how he loved and revered him, and would, by God's help, follow his steps in life and death, he could have borne it all without a murmur. But that he should have gone away forever without knowing it all, was too much to bear."—"But am I sure that he does not know it all?"—the thought made him start—"May he not even now be near me, in this very chapel? If he be, am I sorrowing as he would have me sorrow—as I should wish to have sorrowed when I shall meet him again?"

He raised himself up and looked round; and after a minute rose and walked humbly down to the lowest bench, and sat down on the very seat which he had occupied on his first Sunday at Rugby. And then the old memories rushed back again, but softened and subdued, and soothing him as he let himself be carried away by them. And he looked at the great painted window above the altar, and remembered how when a little boy he used to try not to look through it at the elm-trees and the recks, before the painted glass came—and the subscription for the painted glass, and the letter he wrote home for money to give to it. And there, down below, was the very name of the boy who sat on his right hand on that first day, scratched rudely in the oak panelling.

And then came the thought of all his old schoolfellows; and from after form of boys, nobler and braver and purer than he, rose up and seemed to rebuke him. Could he not think of them, and what they had felt and were feeling, they who had honored and loved from the first the man whom he had taken years to know and love? Could he not think of those yet dearer to him who were gone, who bore his name and shared his blood, and who were now without a husband or a father? Then the grief which he began to share with others became gentle and holy, and he rose up once more, and walked up the steps to the altar; and, while the tears flowed freely down his cheeks, knelt down humbly and hopefully, to lay down there his share of a burden which had proved itself too heavy for him to bear in his own strength.

Here let us leave him—where better could we leave him than at the altar, before which he had first caught a glimpse of the glory of his birthright, and felt the drawing of the bond which links all living souls together in one brotherhood—at the grave, beneath the altar, of him who had opened his eyes to see that glory, and softened his heart till it could feel that bond!

And let us not be hard on him, if at that moment his soul is fuller of the tomb and him who lies there, than of the altar and Him of whom it speaks. Such stages have to be gone through, I believe, by all young and brave souls who must win their way, through hero-worship, to the worship of Him who is the King and Lord of heroes. For it is only through our mysterious human relationships, through the love and tenderness and purity of mothers and sisters and wives, through the strength and courage and wisdom of fathers and brothers and teachers, that we can come to the knowledge of Him, in whom alone the love and the tenderness, and the purity, and the strength, and the courage, and the wisdom of all these dwell forever and ever in perfect fullness.

[THE END.]

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